

CLOSE UP

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CLOSE UP

Vol. X. No. 1

March, 1933



The Yar, one of the most famous Czarist restaurants in Moscow, now converted into the State Institute of Cinema.

Le Yar, l'un des restaurants les plus renommés au temps des tsars, transforme actuellement en Institut d'Etat du Cinéma.

Yar, eines der berühmtesten zaristischen Restaurants in Moskau, jetzt in das staatliche Filminstitut verwandelt.

CINEMATOGRAPHY WITH TEARS!

THE WAY OF LEARNING.

BY S. M. EISENSTEIN.

Note.—In our December issue there appeared an article by Eisenstein, entitled, *Detective Work in the GIK* (The Moscow State Institute of Cinematography). Here is continued an account of the methods employed, and our June issue will contain a long and interesting "case history" in which the film *An American Tragedy*—which, as most of our readers are aware, was to have been Eisenstein's initial American production for Paramount—is discussed in relation to its significance tutorially and thematically, deriving from this article and that which preceded it.

For some time I worried over the almost supernatural powers, transcending common sense and human reason, which seemed indispensable in order to master "The Mysteries of Udolpho" of creative film production.

Dissection of the music of creative film production.

Dissection—but not as one dissects a corpse.

This is what we have to work at with these young people who come to us for the 3rd Course at GIK—the State Institute of Cinematography.

We shall approach this matter simply and not from the standpoint of preconceived scholastic methods.

And we shall not use the corpses of dead productions for studying the processes of montage.

The anatomical theatre and the dissecting room are eminently unsuitable training grounds for the study of drama.

And the study of the film is indissolubly connected with the study of drama.

To build up cinematography, starting from "the idea of the cinematographer" and abstract principles is barbarous and stupid. Only by critical comparison with the more staid early forms of spectacle will it be possible to acquire a critical mastery of the specific methodology of the cinema.

"Criticism must consist in comparing and contrasting a given fact not with an idea, but with another fact; for this purpose the only important thing is that both facts should as far as possible be carefully analyzed and that they should present, in relation to one another, different factors of development." (Lenin: "Who are the Friends of the People?" 1894).

We shall study this question in connexion with the living creative process.

This will be done first of all as follows:—

We shall have to evolve simultaneously the process of work and of method.

And we shall proceed not, like Plekhanov, from established principles of method in general to the concrete individual case; rather we intend, by means of concrete work on individual material to evolve the methods of creative film production.

For this purpose we divulge the secret of the "intimate" creative procedure of the regisseur in all its phases and ramifications.

Many surprises are in store for the youth who is crammed with illusions.

Who has not been enchanted by the classic harmony of the labyrinthine structure of "The Count of Monte-Cristo"?

Who has not been struck by the deadly logic with which the characters and events are woven and interwoven, as though the story had, from the very outset, been conceived just in this form and with these mutual relationships?



Pudovkin (left), instructing a class at the State Institute of Cinema.

Pudovkin (à gauche) donne des leçons à l'Institut d'Etat du Cinéma.

Pudovkin (links) beim Unterricht im Staatlichen Filminstitut.

Who, finally, has not pictured to himself the sudden ecstasy kindled in the mind of the "fat nigger," Dumas, as, with one eagle glance, he embraced the future framework of the novel in all its details and subtleties . . . with the title, "The Count of Monte-Cristo" blazing on its front?

And yet . . . how stimulating and pleasant to be able to recognize, by the taste, the cookery with the aid of which such a remarkable composition was elaborated.

To realize that the work was the outcome of brutal assiduity and not of divine illumination.

It is, in fact, nigger's work—but not the work of the fat, lazy nigger, Dumas. It is toil worthy of a negro labourer from the plantations.

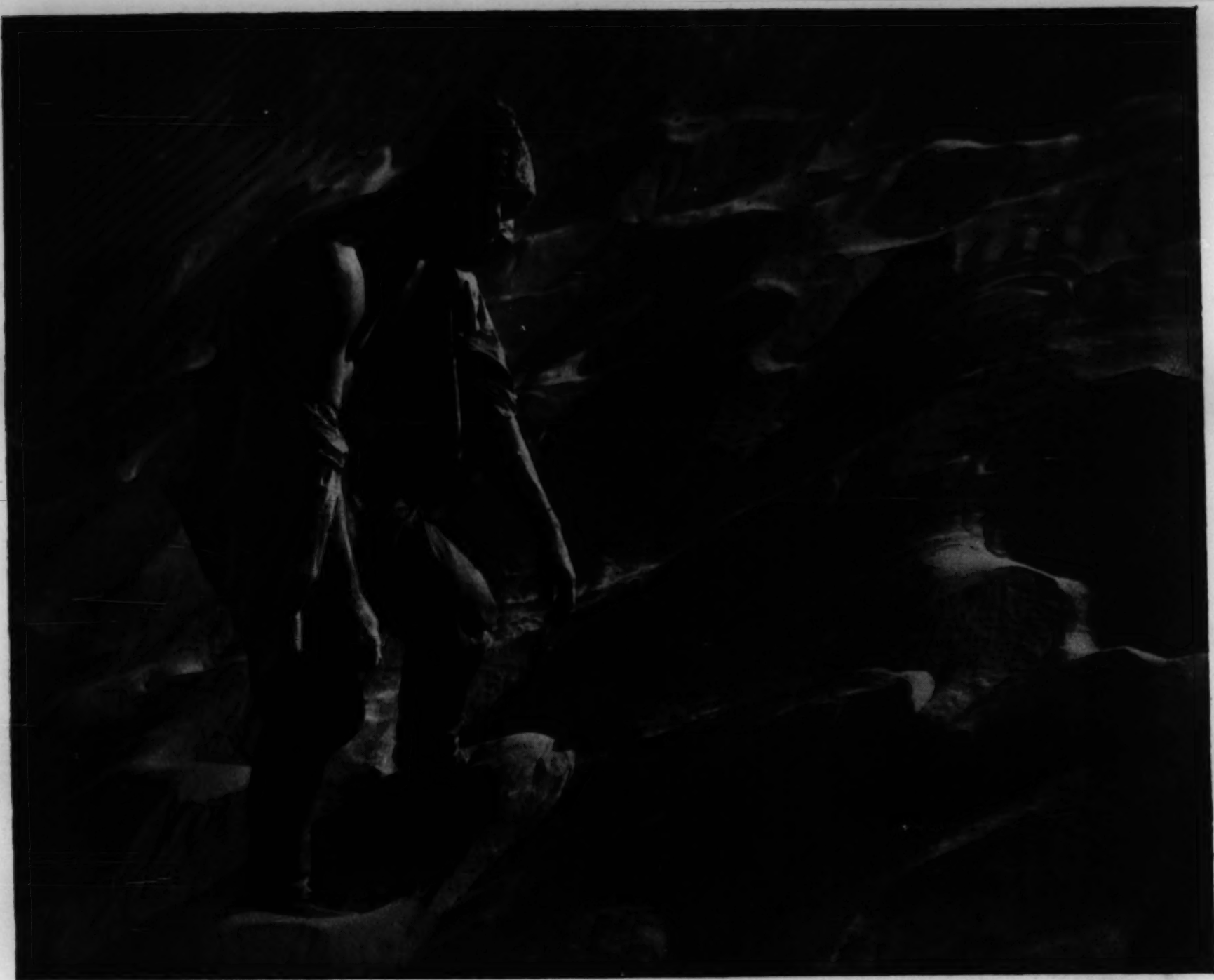
Dumas was actually sprung from negro natives of Haiti, like Toussaint L'Ouverture, the hero of our coming film, "The Black Consul."

The nickname of Dumas's grandfather, General Thomas Alexander, was "black devil."

And "fat nigger" was a nickname bestowed on Dumas by rivals and other envious persons.

A certain individual, who concealed his humble baptismal name of Jacquot beneath the pompous appellation, "Eugène de Mirecourt," wrote of Dumas:

"Scratch Monsieur Dumas's side and you will find a savage . . . He breakfasts on a burning-hot potato, taken straight off the fire, and devours



Shangelaya's "26 Commissars," a Georgian Film.
Du film Georgien : "26 Commissaires," de Shangelaya.
Shangelayas "26 Kommissare," ein georgischer Film.

it without even removing the skin. He is a negro. . ." But, since he needs for his debaucheries 200,000 francs a year, he hires for his literary work anonymous intellectual outcasts and translators, paying them a wage that would be humiliating even for negroes working under the lash of a mulatto."

"Your father was black," someone told Dumas to his face. "My grandfather was a monkey," he answered with a loud guffaw.

To his friend, Béranger, who had begun to be troubled by the rumours of the "literary piracy of the 'fat nigger,'" Dumas wrote:



Shangelaya's "26 Commissars," a Georgian Film.
Du film Georgien : "26 Commissaires," de Shangelaya.
Shangelayas "26 Kommissare," ein georgischer Film.

"Dear old friend. My only nigger is my left hand, which holds the book open while my right hand works eighteen hours a day" . . .

He was slightly exaggerating. He had collaborators,, but—as with Napoleon—they were generals.

Miracles of composition are merely a question of perseverance and of time expended in the training period of one's autobiography.

From the point of view of productivity, this period of romanticism was pre-eminently conspicuous for the dizzy speed of its creative tempo.

In eight days (September 17th to September 25th, 1829) Victor Hugo wrote 3,000 stanzas of "Hernani," which revolutionized the classical drama; in twenty-three days he wrote "Marion de Lorme"; in eleven days, "Lucrezia Borgia"; in nineteen days, "Marie Tudor"; in thirty-four days, "Ruy Blas," etc., etc.

The quantitative output is proportionately great. For instance, the literary estate of Dumas-Père comprised 1,200 volumes . . .

And the opportunity of creating such works is accessible to everyone.

In particular, as regards "The Count of Monte-Cristo."

Here is what Lucas-Dubreton has to say about how it came to be written :

"In the course of his voyage along the Mediterranean Sea, Dumas passed near a small island where he was not allowed to go ashore as the island was 'in an affected state,' and a visit to it would have entailed detention in quarantine. This was the island of Monte-Cristo. He was struck by the name at the time. Some time later, in the year 1843, he agreed with a publisher to write 'Impressions of a Journey through Paris,' but he needed a romantic plot. One day he had the good luck to light upon a story, 20 pages long, entitled 'The Diamond and the Revenge,' referring to the epoch of the second Restoration and included in Peuchet's volume, 'The Police Unveiled.' Here was the subject about which he had been vaguely dreaming: Monte-Cristo shall track down his enemies who are concealed in Paris.

"Then his historical collaborator, Maquet, is fired with the notion of the love-affair between Monte-Cristo and the beautiful Mercédès and the treachery of Danglars. And the two friends set off on a new track: 'The



Shangelaya's "26 Commissars," a Georgian Film.

Du film Georgien: "26 Commissaires," de Shangelaya.

Shangelayas "26 Kommissare," ein georgischer Film.



From a new comedy by Barnet—who made the well-known “Girl with a Hat-Box”—entitled “Outskirts.” Barnet himself appears on left as a peasant.

Cliché d'une nouvelle comédie de Barnet intitulée “Outskirts.” Barnet y figure, à gauche, sous les traits d'un paysan. Il est l'auteur de la très connue : “Fille au carton à chapeaux.”

Aus einer neuen Komödie, betitelt “Peripherie,” von Barnet, dem Schöpfer des wohlbekannten “Mädchen mit der Hutschachtel.” Barnet selbst ist links als Bauer zu sehen.

Count of Monte-Cristo' is to be no longer a volume of romantic travel impressions, but a novel pure and simple.

“The Abbé Faria, a lunatic born at Goa, whom Châteaubriand saw trying vainly to kill a canary by hypnotizing it, helped to reinforce the element of mystery, and on the horizon began to loom the outlines of the Château d'If and the dungeons of Edmond Dantès and the aged Faria . . .”

That is how works are actually constructed.

And to realize how it is done and actually participate in the process seems to me most advantageous and instructive for students.

The element of chance is far less important in this connexion than might appear, and the element of law within the creative process becomes palpably perceptible.

There must be method, but a pre-conceived methodological plan will not



Kuzmina of "New Babylon" and "Alone," who plays the leading part in Barnet's new film, "Outskirts."

L'acteur Kuzmina, connu par ses précédents rôles dans "Nouvelle Babylone" et "Seul," est l'interprète principal du nouveau film de Barnet : "Outskirts" (Frontières).

Kuzmina aus "Neu Babylon" und "Einsamkeit," stellt die Hauptrolle in Barnets neuem Film "Peripherie dur."

yield any fruit. And a tempestuous stream of creative energy uncontrolled by method will yield still less.

Detailed analysis of the structure of compositions stage by stage reveals the most rigid conformity to a law arising out of the basic social and ideological underlying premises and governing every ramification of the work.

And the golden fever of commercial activity and money-making which marks the epoch of Louis-Philippe is also a leading factor in the golden legend of the fabulously wealthy ex-sailor, now an all-powerful count—a no less important factor than Dumas's childish recollections of Scheherezade and the treasures of Ali Baba.

And the very fact that a sailor might become a count meant that "anyone" might become a count.

In an age when the pursuit of riches and aristocratic titles was general, the sailor, Dantès, become the fabulously wealthy Monte-Cristo, served as an excellent "social ideal" for the bourgeoisie, who were enriching themselves at a feverish rate.

Not without reason is this character surmised to be an idealized self-portrait.

For Dumas himself, equally with the rest, wallowed voluptuously in the muddy sea of dubious wealth engendered by questionable speculations in the reign of "King Bourgeois."

"— A million? That is exactly what I usually carry with me in my pocket."

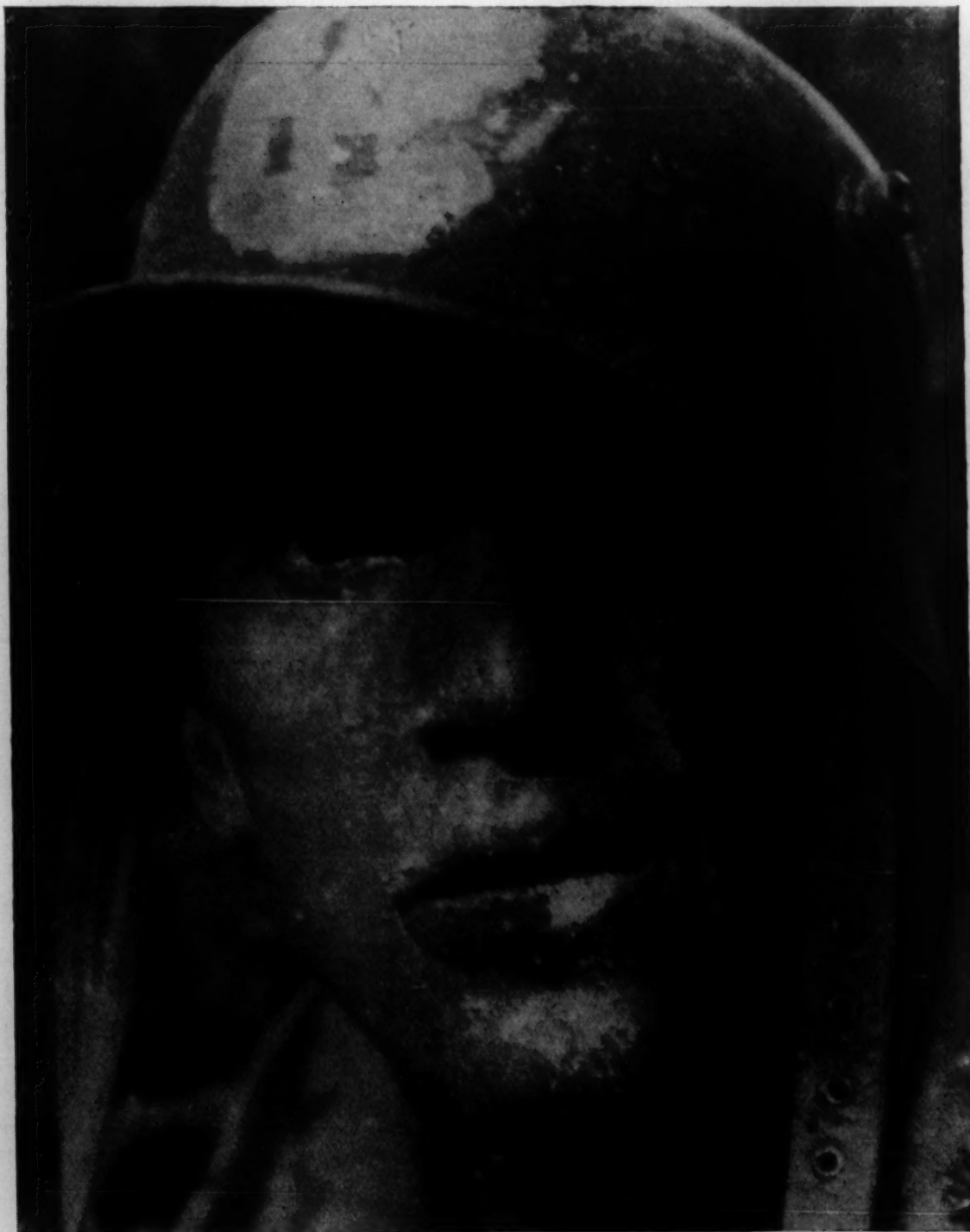
This remark symbolizes in a unique degree the unattainable ideal both of the "fat nigger" himself, who squandered money recklessly and was literary potentate of the newspaper, feuilleton and dramatic world of the Paris of that day, and also of the vast hordes of greedy sharpers and adventurers with which Paris was swarming.

However, if we are fully to realize how these social, economic and ideological premises determine every slightest variation of form and how indissolubly they are connected, we must trace out a complete creative cycle independently and conscientiously from start to finish.

Krutchkov, of the Moscow Theatre of Young Workers, in "Outskirts."

Krutchkov, du Théâtre des Jeunes Travailleurs de Moscou, dans "Outskirts" (Frontières).

Krutschkov vom Theater der jungen Arbeiter in Moskau, in "Peripherie."





From "The Golden Mountain," a new film by Ermler and Yutkevitch.

"La montagne d'or," nouveau film de Ermler et Yutkevitch.

Aus "Der goldene Berg." Ein neuer Film von Ermler und Yutkevitsch.

Of course, the most interesting of all would be to get hold of another Goethe or Gogol and set him to compose before the auditorium a 3rd part of "Faust" or a new second volume of "Dead Souls."

But we have not even a living Alexandre Dumas at our disposal.

Therefore we transform the students of the third course of GIK into . . . a collective regisseur and film-constructor.

The director is merely a *primus inter pares*, the first among equals.

* * *

The collective—and, later on, each individual separately—has to work its way through all the difficulties and torments of creative work, through the whole process of creative composition, from the first faint, glimmering hint of the theme down to the decision whether the buttons on the jacket of the most insignificant performer are suitable for filming purposes.

The task of the director is merely, by a dexterous and timely shove, to propel the collective in the direction of legitimate and fruitful difficulties

and of a just and thoughtful consideration of those questions, the answers to which lead to the construction of something and not to fruitless chatter about it.

That is how people are taught to fly in circuses.

The trapeze is held back mercilessly, or the hand is just held out if the tempo of the pupil is inexact.

It will do him no harm if he falls wide of the safety net once or twice and injures himself by falling on to the seats in the auditorium.

He won't do it next time.

But no less solicitously, at every stage must the helpful material furnished by the knowledge and experience inherited from the past be duly and opportunely thrust into the hands of confused or nonplussed workers.

But not only that. If one all-embracing synthetic giant is not available, yet at every new stage there is, beside the inheritance from the past,

*From "The Golden Mountain,"
a new film by Ermler and
Yutkevitch.*

*"La montagne d'or," nouveau
film de Ermler et Yutkevitch.*

*Aus "Der goldene Berg."
Ein neuer Film von Ermler
und Yutkevitch.*





*"Ivan," Dovzhenko's new film. Production Wufku.
Photo du nouveau film de Dovzhenko : "Ivan." Production Wufku.
"Ivan," Dovzhenkos neuer Film. Production Wufku.*

a "living inheritor," who with its aid has made himself a redoubtable expert in his particular branch.

In the plan for the general course the expert must be invited to deal with the definite, concrete case, with the particular stage in the evolution of the creative process where his knowledge is of value.

All this refers to the production of a really big thing, conscientiously carried out from beginning to end.

For this purpose we bid good riddance once and for all to the system of displaying studies made by students who have completed their training—clumsy, unequal productions, as short of intelligence as they are short in length.

This system must be abandoned as utterly futile.

The art of film-making does not consist in ingenious choice of a cadre or in unexpected abridgments.

The essential thing in a film is that every item of the picture should be an organic part of an organically conceived whole.

The pieces made by the students ought to be organically conceived and photographed parts of one big, significant and general conception, and not stray, unrelated studies.

By these several photographed pieces and by the episodes preceding and following them which are set but not photographed, as well as by the

working out of montage plans and sheets for the particular parts allotted to them, the students will be really cured of creative vagueness.

Their work will be controlled from beginning to end, and at the same time will furnish an effectual indication as to how far they are capable of giving practical expression to a clearly defined general conception. At this stage it will not yet be a case of the student's individual conception—but of a conception which is arrived at collectively and consequently serves the more effectually as a rigorous lesson in self-discipline.

This self-discipline is still more necessary when the conception becomes personal and individual.

But before reaching this last stage, this ultimate frontier, which already borders on after-school production, the students will have to run the gauntlet of long rows of living or dead connoisseurs in their several domains.

At a certain stage this will be a long discussion about the type, figure and character of the principal protagonist. The shades of Balzac, Gogol, Dostoyevsky or Ben Jonson will be evoked.

The question will arise as to the embodiment of this particular type, figure and character. Here we rely on the autobiographical confessions of Kachalov, Batalov, Max Strauch, etc.

Having threaded the mazes of plot-construction and having studied the Elizabethan dramatists with Aksenov, we listen to Dumas-Père and Victor



"The Deserter," Pudovkin's latest sound-film, in which it is said are amazing technical innovations.

"Le Déserteur," dernier film sonore de Pudovkin, presente, dit-on, d'étonnantes innovations techniques.

"Der Deserteur," Pudovkins letzter Tonfilm, in welchem angeblich überraschende technische Neuerungen verwendet wurden.



*A scene from Pudovkin's new film, "The Deserter."
 Une scène du nouveau film de Pudovkin : "Le Déserteur."
 Eine Szene aus Pudovkins neuem Film "Der Deserteur."*

Shklovsky on scenic plot-composition and the methods of Weltmann's productions.

Then, having studied the dramatic essence of situations with Webster and Volkenshtein, we pass on to consider how the situation can be clothed in words.

Aleksey Maksimovich Gorky will probably not refuse to initiate us into the methods of writing the dialogues of "The Lower Depths" or "Egor Bulichev." Nikolay Erdman will enlighten us as to how it is done in his works.

And Babel will tell us about the specifics of formal and of verbal structure and the technique of extreme laconism—Babel who, perhaps, has a better practical grasp than anyone else of the great secret that "... no iron can enter into the human heart with such stupefying effect as a full stop opportunely placed."

Inimitable use is made of this laconism in his wonderful "Decline"—perhaps the best example of the best dramatic dialogue of recent years.

All these things will come up for consideration at corresponding stages of the progressive and united creative labours of our collective regisseur. The welding together of the different stages of independent analytical excursions is nothing very terrible. The building up of the theme and

the plot can sometimes be completely independent of the verbal treatment. Do not "Revizor" and "Dead Souls," for instance, afford brilliant examples of the treatment of subjects propounded from outside?

The question of the musical formulation of the sound medium is a question of the material medium.

Analysis of a considerable number of other examples of "inheritance from the past," each from the standpoint of the particular quality which it specially illustrates, may be extremely instructive.

James Joyce and Emil Zola.

Honoré Daumier and Edgar Degas.

Toulouse-Lautrec and Stendhal.

And Marxist and Leninist specialists will analyze lengthily and circumstantially the question of the correct ideological setting of the problem from the standpoint of approach to the theme and sociological understanding of the work.

By this means we hope to provide mobilized experience and skilled support for the guidance of those who have to wrestle with the task of creating a film.



"Soviet Flax," a Meshrabpom-Film, with manuscript and direction by Svorkov, Sadorogny and Kulikov.

"Le lin soviétique," film Meshrabpom, manuscrit et régie de Svorkov, Sadorogny et Kulikov.

"Soujet-Flachs," ein Meshrabpom Film. Manuskript und Regie : Svorkov, Sadorogny und Kulikov.



*Skyscraper photographs by Francis Bruguiere.
Photos de gratte-ciel, par Francis Bruguière.
Wolkenkratzerphotos von Francis Bruguiere.*

PSEUDOMORPHIC FILM

"I was at the first-view of the Eisenstein drawings at the Becker Galleries in New York. In passing it can be remarked how many galleries in America are run for social publicity. But the Eisenstein drawings are carried out boldly in black chalk with red for blood. All of the bull-rings in Mexico. Psychologically interesting as well as artistically."

Francis Bruguière saw more than the Russian master's sketches in New York. He has the camera-eye: while on his recent trip, he edited sensations to pace them with film nerves. His impressions make a Vertoff document, scenario-prompting with social consequence.

"Hope, still! When first you come into New York harbour you see GASOMETERS. As good as those of the Gas, Light and Coke Co. in England. So progress has been maintained! Lots of people begin waving too early at NEW LAND and have to keep it up. Quarantine officers, in picturesque poses, drift by in their inefficient and dirty boat.

"West Side of New York—isn't this the city which Russia dreams about? Garbage cans taking wings with escaping paper-filth and kids playing among the tissues of smells. Cobblestones which never fit the environment they are supposed to project. Tenement houses with corks jammed into possibilities of the house-telephones!

"It must always be in a political programme that the subways fares are five cents, any distance. Folk beg for subway fares in order that they may keep warm at night. Street cars are getting older and noisier every year, while the rest of the world gets older and poorer.

"Fifth Avenue. Radio City (now Rockefeller Centre). Savoy Plaza Hotel. The broken fountain where the babies of the rich are laid in tiers to play. The banks where the whole staff act a show, turning over flower catalogues and such, if you go in to do any business. . . . There is only this small section of New York which sets out to make eye-dazzle with skyscrapers: if you look up at the skyscrapers your eyes become blinded with anthracite dust! The higher you live in a skyscraper, and avoid more smells of petrol and noise, the more expensive it is: there are clouds round the tops of some of the buildings. Rates have been halved: people pay in writing! Still, the Empire State Building, which was built to take 80,000 people, has only 300 tenants. Silent City of the Air! This is the end of skyscraper construction in New York—at least for some time. Nights bring dark, unoccupied skies! Interior lighting, to match the world depression, is universally amber!

"Streets of New York, to-day! On the sidewalks someone always slips dead to the pavement—starvation cases. Organised rackets: one man rescues a passer-by from a bully. If the passer-by does not show gratitude with a money gift, a third pal approaches and lays him flat.





"Traffic in the roadway runs by lights. No driver looks at pedestrians, only lights. He who does not give his whole time to calculating the lights well, the papers publish a charming little clock called *The Hands of Death* In the taxis, as in the hotels, eternal radios play advertisements. Taxi boys are interested enough in the world depression to shout across the streets to foot-travellers—some of the things they have to offer!

"Police cars clang past. Police use machine-guns, not pistols. I saw one gunman caught. Three standing near were shot down. Other civilians panicked against walls and called out to the police, "We are not communists, we are not communists! . . . Fire engines sweep by: every hour there is a fire!

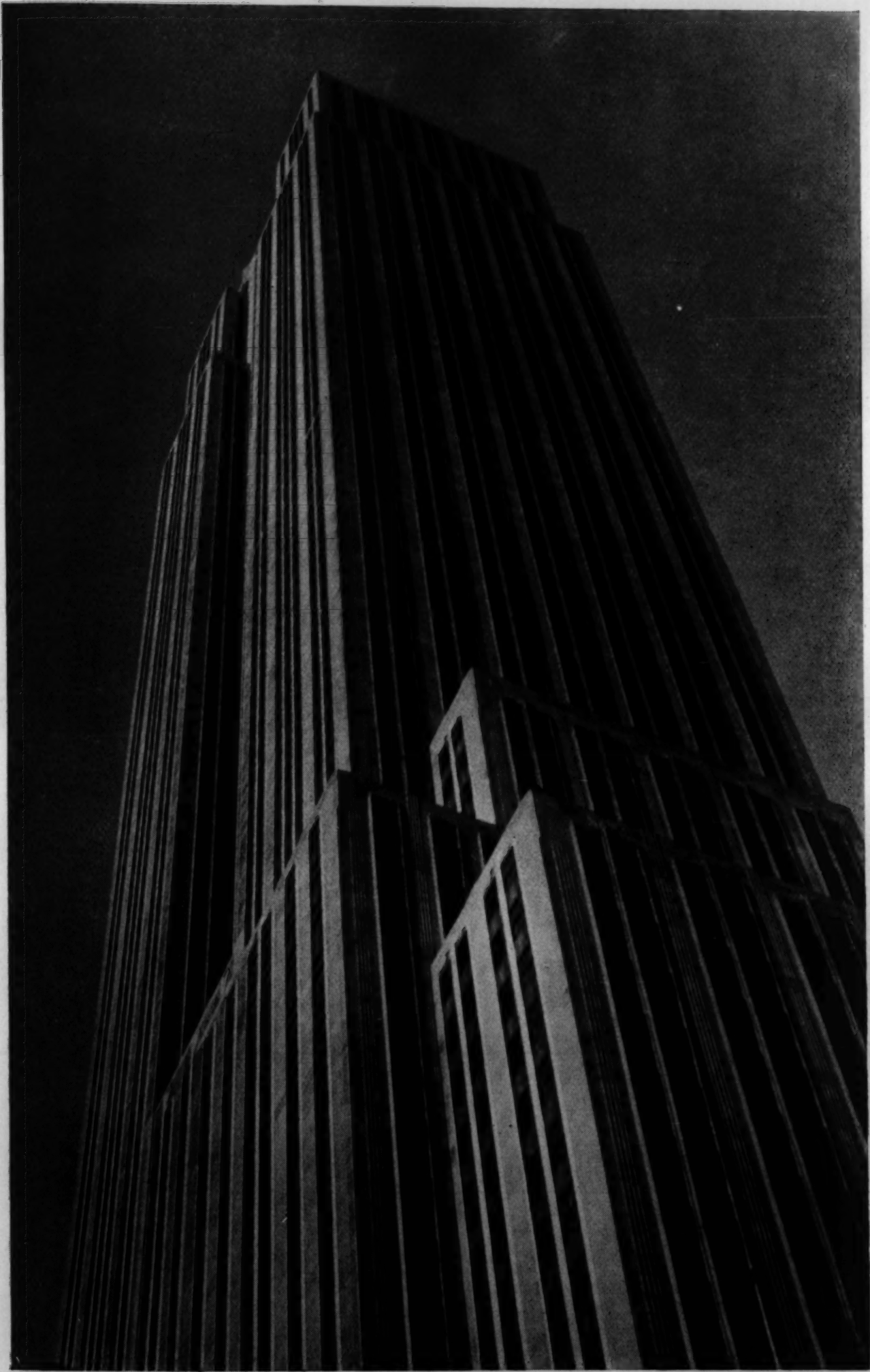
"From the Plaza stretches Central Park. Its stunted trees and rock-grown grass are generally covered with the 365 pages of the Sunday newspaper. There is no money to clean it up. They have made a film of it.

"There are so many lights under the canopies of Broadway's cinemas that the Broadway smell is quite one of the worst of New York's particulars. The morons, who ever tramp up and down Broadway, like best burlesque shows which are called 'strippers': girls undress while comedians make jokes about fairies.

"In a rush now—because this pseudomorphic film is out-running its footage . . . There are no garages: you pay the policeman . . . There are one or two speakeasies off Broadway where one may walk up a sweeping staircase like a gentleman or a lady or both and peer down at statues of Danté. Most speakeasies, though, are popular because they are dirty and old: the aristocratic houses of yesterday with holes in the carpets. Weak California Wine . . . Harlem: concentration on music—then what a lot of spitting! . . . What has been done for justice in New York has been done by the Jewish people . . .

"Anyway, I feel that skyscrapers are only successful when they are not architecture, when they have no Renaissance tops. That is why I hope this account may have slight virtue."

O. B.





Note on Five Bruguere Photographs

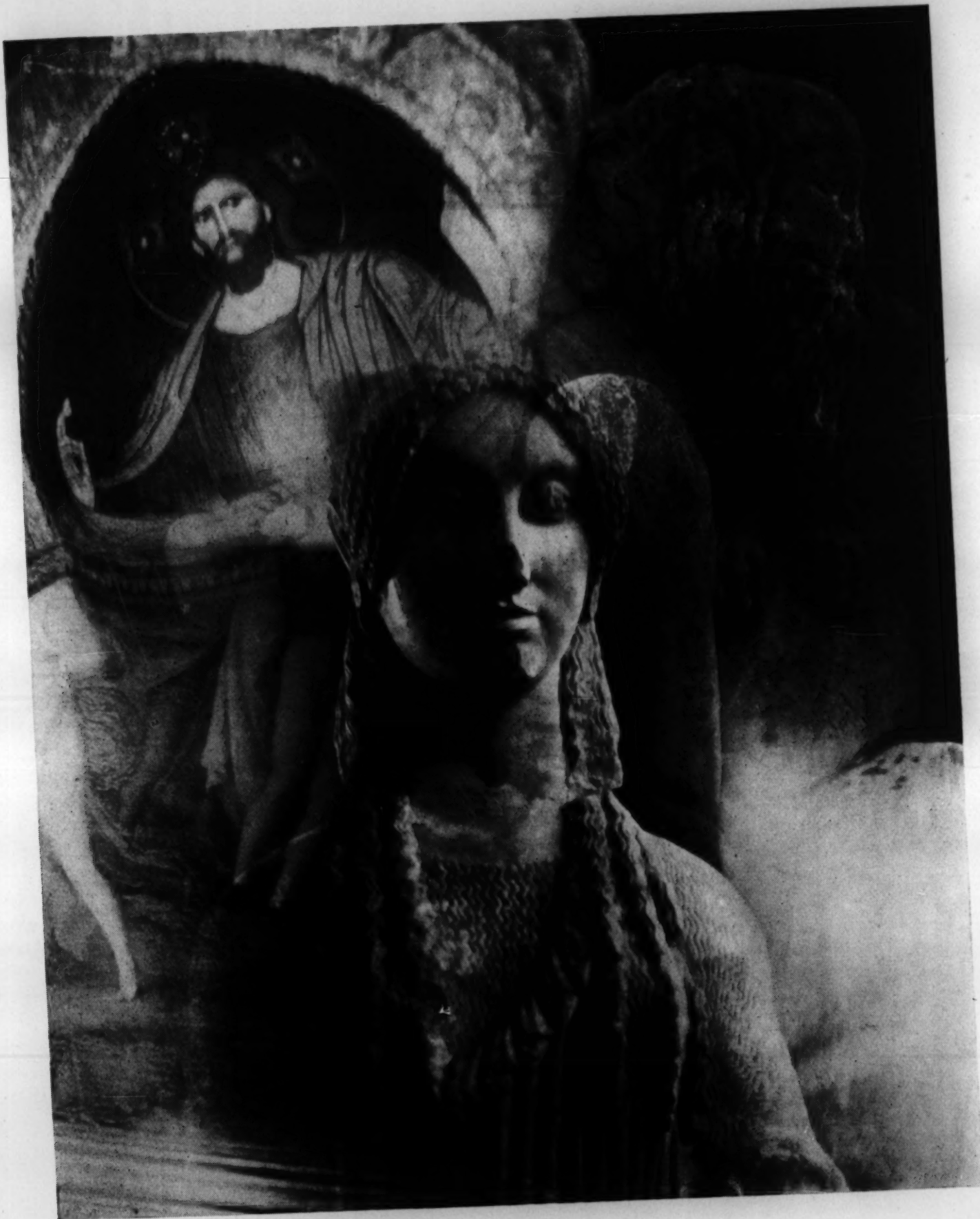
This, and the following four photographs by Francis Bruguere, must speak for themselves, for no words—except perhaps in the Greek poems translated by H. D.—could be needed, or indeed justified.

In their conception of noble paradox they achieve a mysticism which is certainly more than ephemeral. Bringing together expressions of the loftiest heights of human aspiration and heights romanticised by expediency, they succeed in merging, in becoming dissociated memoirs of hieratic impact.

Close Up has probably not printed before pictures so intrinsically dynamic, so innately motivated and complete. Impressionistic, in the simplest sense of the word, they inform the parallelism of classic divergences with a unity which to those who pursue their ideals along the mellow paths of antiquity will be rare sustenance.

From the inscrutable Attic goddess and sky-line temple with its sacred olives, sheep and quiet sea and pale sea-monastery tilting over all, to Byzantium and cinquecento Florence, to the ritually crucified lord-of-all against what looks like latish Roman walls, is, as they say, a far cry. Yet the same transcendentalism occurs in each. Incidentally, the "latish Roman walls" are a bit of a mystery. Those columns. In the Pelasgic walls, marbles of different periods—later, of course—are to be found, as in the grotto above the Theatre of Dionysus—or the fortress-like clumsy Roman Odeon. But these walls are not prehistoric, far from it. And yet the columns do not appear to be superimposed. We shall have to ask Mr. Bruguere . . .

K. M.









THE YEAR OF THE ECLIPSE

I shall use quotations from my correspondence to *Close Up*'s last number for 1932 as keys to my first correspondence to 1933, since what I have to say grows from "Dog Days in the Movie." "The movie of *delirium tremens*—on near beer!" . . . The outlook for 3.2 per cent. brew is good. The difference between the promised and the present "near beer" brand is the quantity of hope in American breasts, deceived into that hope by the promise of a prosperity that will follow upon the liquidation of prohibition. Hoax upon hoax—the vision of the desperate! And the movie is its immediate image. It reads *concoction* as *experience*, the momentarily effective as the memorable, or neglects the quality of the memory altogether. I asked: "Is there really a fool born every minute, and how long can the movie wait till he grows up, or shall it get him while he is still young?" (The printer put down "young" as "wrong"—not an inaccurate error.) The fool to-day is not constantly foolish, his reaction cannot be counted upon as certainly as in earlier days. 1932 was the year of the eclipse, astronomically and in the cinema. Not even the attractiveness of Marlene Dietrich sustained *Blonde Venus*; it was removed from the Paramount Theatre before its engagement was really over. The crowd was as wise as the critic. The critic should have been wiser: he should have seen *Blonde Venus* in *The Blue Angel* and foretold the inevitable. Sternberg may succeed Pommer at U.F.A. That is ironical, because what is creditable in to-day's Sternberg is really Pommer.

* | * *

The most painful partial eclipse was that of Lewis Milestone. Although Tom Buckingham was the accredited director of *Cock o' the Air* and Nate Watts the accredited supervisor, Mr. Milestone had a great deal to do with it. Its wretchedness was partly due to the delicate interference of the Hays troupe. But I am puzzled by the puerility of a field-general like Milestone, who uses his prestige and authority, his talent, to toss off rowdyisms stodgy and unprovocative. The fault seems to be the desire to repeat a previous success, *Two Arabian Knights*, just as in *Rain*, Milestone seems to have wanted another *tour de force* like *The Front Page*, a film of major importance in the history of the compound cinema. Others have observed two of Mr. Milestone's limitations: his belief that speech should be uninterrupted, his inability to direct women. The first limitation deserves study. In *The Front Page* Milestone correctly gauged the *quantity* of speech and its velocity (the relation of speech to visual-motor *density*) and thereby, for the first time, presented the principle that though the *plane of correlation* in the cinema is visual-motor, the vocal element in the compound may, if the subject-matter requires, set the pace for the unit. In this particular film (Milestone's milestone) the vehicle gave the cargo an appearance of sub-



Seeing others as we see them ourselves. On rare occasions only ! An ingenious, if rather disquieting series of publicity stills of the Marx brothers—probably only two of the four, but we leave it to you !

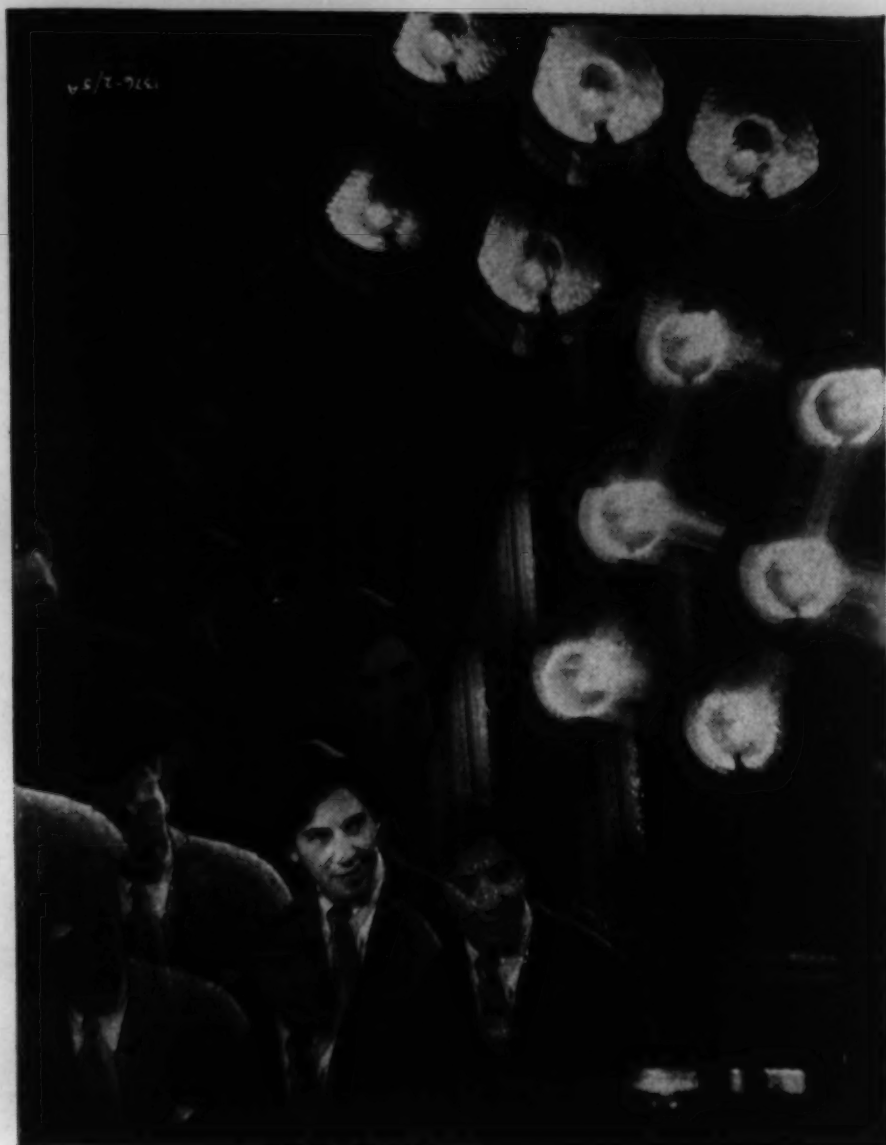
Points de vue exceptionnels. Série de clichés publicitaires aussi ingénieux qu'inquiétants des Frères Marx—deux ? quatre ? devinez-le !

Andere sehen, wie man sie selbst sieht. Nur bei seltenen Gelegenheiten ! Eine geistreiche, wenn auch beunruhigende Reihe von Photos der Marx Brothers—wahrscheinlich nur zwei von den vieren, aber wir überlassen es Ihnen.

stance. Indeed, I half-suspect that the director recognized that the play had more appearance than substance : it was a typical Ben Hecht imposture, garbling half-truths and circumstantial data into the semblance of an indictment. The glamour of the vehicle rendered the cargo glamorous until the



end, when the vehicle could shatter itself and leave no memory, save that of a principle of construction—valuable to the practitioner but not to the audience. In *Rain* such treatment would find the resistance of a more sullen material, pseudo-psychology, picturesqueness, mood. The interferences criss-crossed to make a picture that seemed to fall apart with every scene, and yet—it was not quite so condemnatory of Milestone as some would have us believe. Elements of sternness were present and, if the regisseur's inability to direct women was apparent, it served to show up Joan Crawford. Without her accustomed M.G.M. directors and flattering cameramen, she became, as someone said, "a female impersonator." The chief fault in the



case of Milestone is one of conscience: he is not sufficiently insistent upon the important subjects he can command and direct.

* * *

There were other temporary eclipses. The entire industry has been operating in the dark. Joseph I. Breen of the Hays office enumerates the besetting evils thus: The industrial depression; Too many theatres; Competition by other forms of entertainment such as radio and dog racing; Destruction of the illusion surrounding screen personalities by too intimate revelations in the fan magazines; A lack of big personalities on the screen. . . . Not a word about the films themselves! However, those in the industry itself recognize that something is wrong with the product. They do not read the difficulty as harshly as I have read it: "... the courage of facing reality and elucidating it in the movies." They call it "topical films." It is interesting to see how the different studios interpret the topical. Columbia, the latest recruit to the Hays organization, issues completely dishonest pictures like *American Madness* and *Washington Merry-Go-Round*. The latter boasts of a "courage" that insults the unemployed veterans, who have no representative in either Washington or Hollywood. Less sychophantic films are those produced by Warner Brothers, a previously dull studio that has awakened with some vigor to the current scene. Jack

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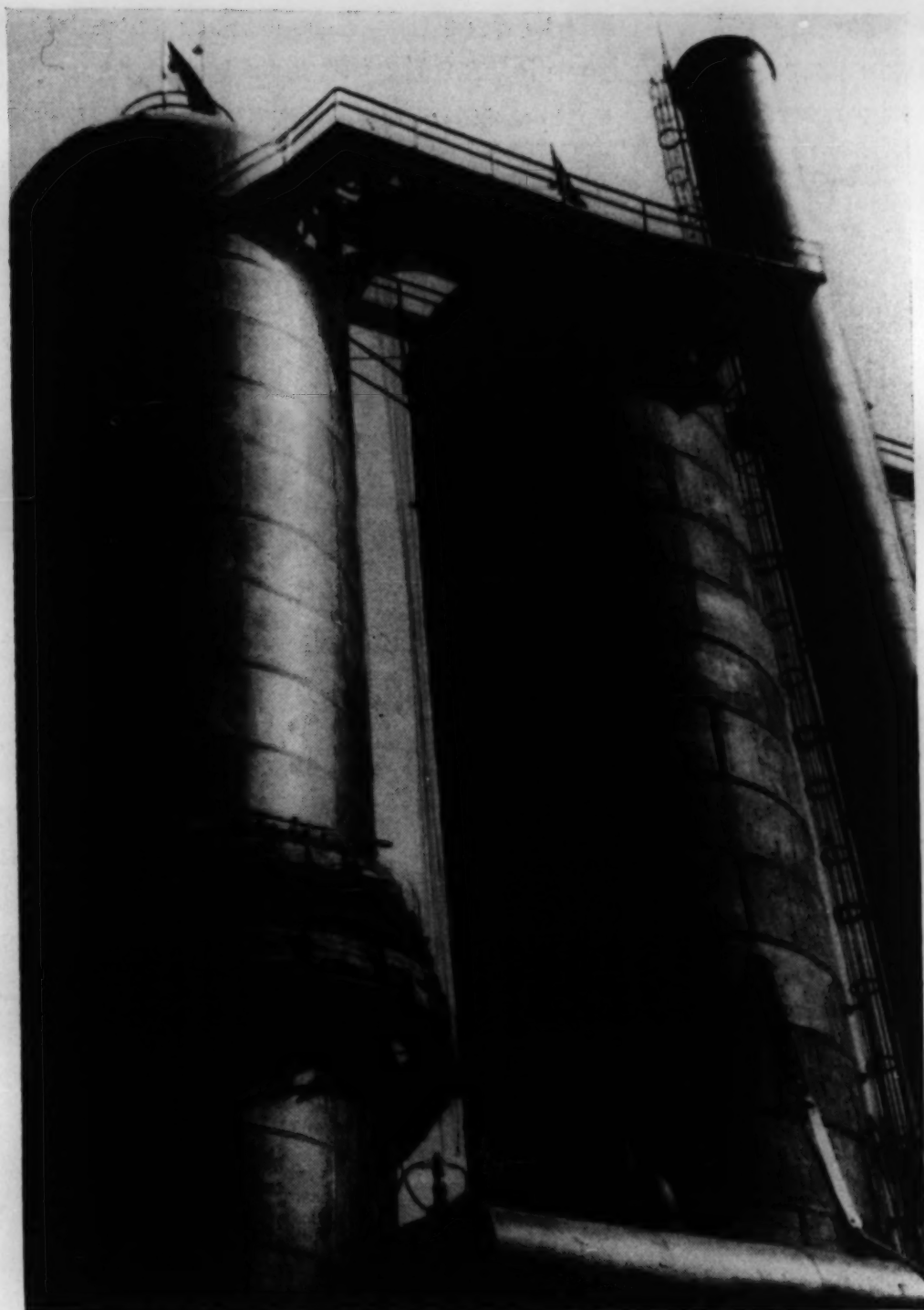
Warner, production chief, announces that: "Newspapers will be watched this year as they were last for ideas and plots."

* * *

We may divide these topical films into two categories: social segment films, personality films. Unfortunately, the individualistic, star-systematized cinema makes no strenuous effort to make one of the two, which is the Soviet intention. Of the Warner pictures the two that come nearest to this unification are: *The Cabin in the Cotton* and *I am a Fugitive*. This approximation is made possible by two facts: these are not stories about "prodigious" personalities (as in the case of *The Match King* and *Silver Dollar*) where the social happening is popularly obscured by the quasi-legendary figure; they are stories having widespread reference quickly discernible in the current scene. Because they have widespread reference, it is worth our while to see how this reference is handled in the film. *The Cabin in the Cotton* is not an exceptionally arresting film in its direction, its central person is earnestly but not vibrantly enacted by Richard Barthelmess, remnant of the Griffith camp, but its subject-matter is the most important the American film has risked in years. It is the *class-struggle*. Does this mean, however, that the movie has yielded its restriction on films of the struggle between capital and labor? Not at all. The newsreels still keep out clips that might refer to that warfare, the steel trust has time and time again stipulated that it will not permit the use of its premises to enact that struggle. A film like *Taxi* was not borne along its logical motif of the struggle between the taxi-trust and the privately-owned taxi. I understand Cagney wanted such a story, but it was rejected as being "labor v. capital"! I know a young man in the publicity department of one of the largest companies who wrote a scenario situated in Pittsburgh. His scenario won him a job in the editorial department, but the scenario itself was rejected as being too much on the labor-theme, although the author was very careful to keep any semblance of that theme remotely in the background, where everything important is usually kept (in the capitalistic cinema). And then there was the controversy over the Boulder (Hoover) Dam scenario, when the delegated scenarists found "forced labor" in the American enterprise. The net result of the controversy was two scenarists "canned" and a strengthening of the dictum against "capital-labour films."

* * *

The class-struggle as expressed in *The Cabin in the Cotton* is agrarian. The action is set in a locale not the most remunerative to the film, not the most influential in effecting opinion and not on the most intimate terms with industrial and finance capital. Observe that no tie-up is made between the agrarian and the industrial South, a tie-up very real to-day in our economic Society. Our world is an industrial one basically, and it is in the basic segment that no study is even remotely attempted. Therefore, while the movie will dare an *I am a Fugitive*, it renders prison-life in the industrial North as



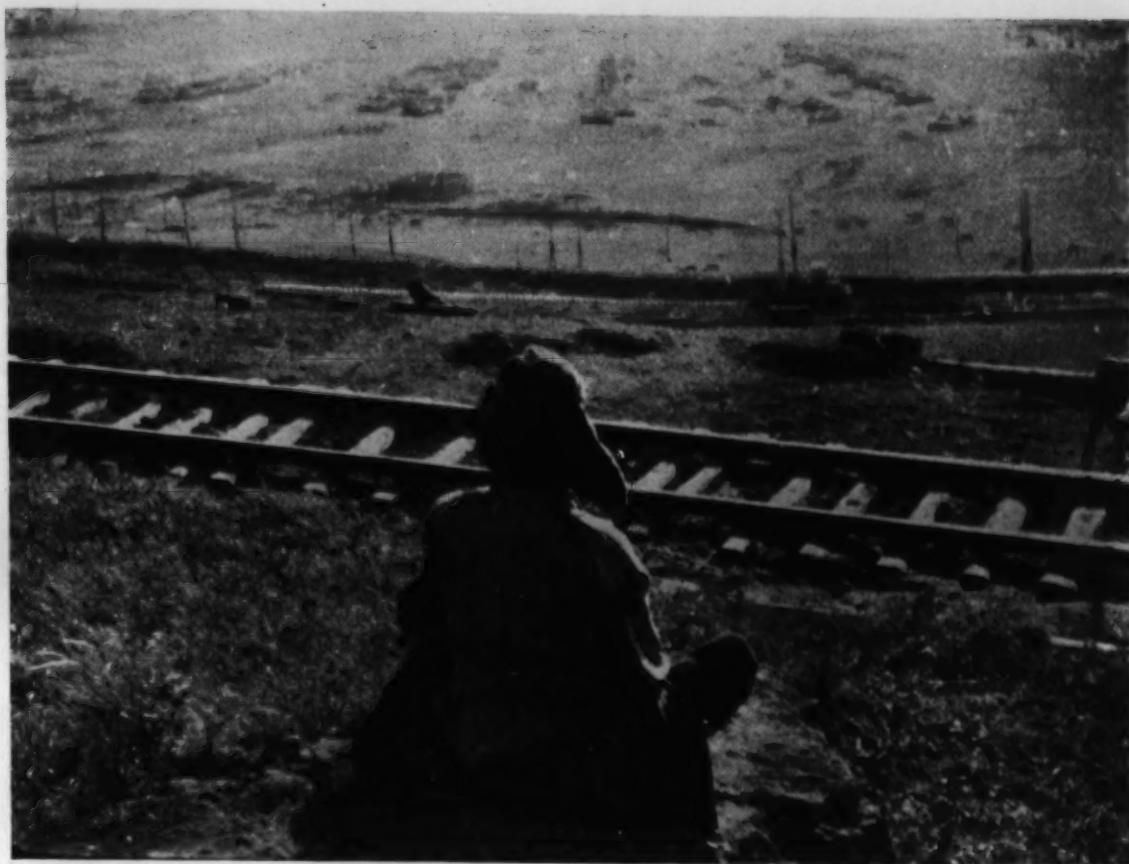
Blast furnace in the film "Komsomol."
Haut-fourneau, du film "Komsomol."
Hochofen, aus dem Film "Komsomol."

truly reformatory (idealistic penology) in *20,000 Years in Sing Sing*, a preposterous title for another story of a self-sacrificing racketeer. Further separation occurs in *The Cabin in the Cotton*, the Negro sharecropper and tenant-farmer from the white. The only presence of a Negro is in the blind singer who chants as he passes the jazz-festive home of the planter. Yet the outstanding phenomena of the agrarian South to-day are the revolutionary self-assertion of the Negro peon, the class-amity between erstwhile foes, black and white dispossessed. Amity is urged in this film, not intra-class-amity (as in *Kameradschaft*) but inter-class amity (as in Phyllis Bentley's novel,

"Inheritance"). And who is to effect this impossible conciliation? The hyphenate, whose father has been cheated and sent to an early death by the planter who is now the son's benefactor because he recognizes in the boy profitable material. In politics the hyphenate is easily characterized, in an ostensibly non-political novel or film he is not so readily stamped—he becomes first pitiable then heroic—when he shows up the greed of the one "bad" planter in order to have him shake hands with the tenants. A proper conclusion would have been the boy's assumption of tenant-leadership against the planter. Two falsehoods are presented to strengthen the drama of conciliation: the tenants steal the planters' cotton and seek to set up their own broker in Memphis (how long could a tenant conceal the bales before he were apprehended?), the collaborator of the hyphenate in making the peace is the district attorney—an agent of the planters who is presented as a friend of the tenants! There are other details equally suspect. Yet, it would be sectarian and dishonest not to say that this film, in its argument and mood, balances the sympathy to the credit of the tenants. That is assuredly a victory! a concession to a rising temper. The tenants are facially well-chosen, not non-professional players but professionals chosen and controlled upon the documentary principle—director Curtiz has evidently learned something from the Russians. For the first time, in my immediate recollection, the movie has dared to approach lynching as a contemporary American custom. Here the victim is a white peasant who has been sorely driven to the murder of a planter. More should have been made of the scene since it submits the climax to the hyphenate's evolving attitude. We must recognize also that this is not a typical instance. The typical instance is lynching not on a "real" but a framed charge; the most frequent instances are the organized mob-murders of Negroes, but that is an indisputable fact to which our conscience is too sensitive—we can argue the lynching in *The Cabin in the Cotton* as rare and therefore chance. Still, the incomplete presentation of the pursuit and lynching of a white man by wealthy men of his own race is an incipient suggestion of the fact that lynchings are economic. Therefore, for all its distortion of the social theme it particularizes, *The Cabin in the Cotton* is an advance in the movie's content. A more truthful production would have sought its material in works like *Georgia Nigger*, *To Make my Bread*, *Call Home the Heart*, *Strike!* or *Gathering Storm*.

* * *

As a work of cinema, *I am a Fugitive from a (Georgia) Chain-Gang*, is superior to *The Cabin in the Cotton*. Its young director, Mervyn Le Roy, is as yet an eclectic of the second or third order. He has made as bad a film as *Numbered Men*, films as inflated for their tiny intelligence as *Big City Blues* and *Three on a Match*, and pictures as reputable as *Little Cæsar*, *Five-Star Final* and *I am a Fugitive*. His career is an argument for the importance of content: the better the story, the better has been his direction! Le Roy is gifted in the American open-play tradition that has been

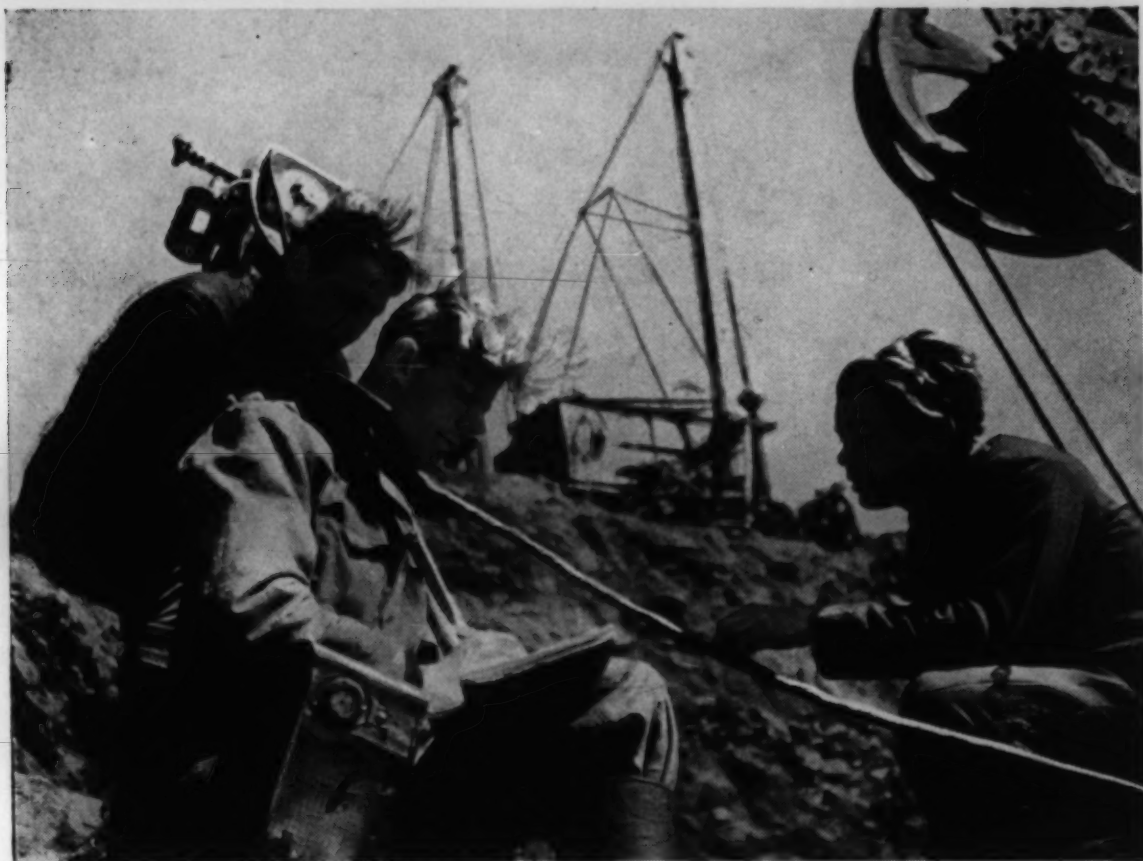


*A Khirghiz flute-player watches the city growing out of the steppe. From
"Komsomol."*

*Un joueur de flûte kirghize contemple la naissance d'une cité dans la steppe.
Du film "Komsomol."*

*Ein kirgisischer Flötenspieler sieht zu, wie die Stadt aus der Steppe wächst. Aus
"Komsomol."*

deserted by von Sternberg, but which Milestone enlivened in *The Front Page*. His last films show Le Roy's indebtedness to Milestone, but he has not the older man's proficiency in timing. If the talkie has damaged anything in the American idiom, it is its metric. I do not lament this disturbance for it serves to break up the confounding of time with speed-uninterrupted action. In *I am a Fugitive* Le Roy shows skill in the alternations of speech and silence, but he fails to convey lapse of time, despite his use of the archaic calendar-leaves (an archaism improved somewhat by the coincidence of hammer-beat) and distance (which must be conveyed conjointly by space of time) by means of an inanimate, inexpressive map. Le Roy exhibits the Milestone weakness in his direction of women; he was successful with Aline MacMahon in *Five-Star Final* because she is a superior player with a masculine emphasis (her roles are "hard"). The young director was more successful in the sensational or spectacular scenes (although the second escape was, in its scenario, quite routine), and less successful in the scenes away from prison—as in the period of the fugitive's rise to success. This attests to the immaturity not alone of Le Roy, but also of the American movie-mind. Le Roy's faults are as much environmental as personal. They



H. P. J. Marshall (left foreground) and Joris Ivens (right) on the top of Magnet Mountain during the filming of their picture, "Magnetogorsk."

H. P. J. Marshall (devant, à gauche) et Joris Ivens (à droite) au sommet de la Montagne Magnet, pendant la réalisation de leur film : "Magnetogorsk."

H. P. J. Marshall (im Vordergrund links) und Joris Ivens (rechts) auf der Spitze des Magnetbergs, während der Aufnahmen zu ihrem Film "Magnetogorsk."

arise from the American aspiration to be momentarily effective, which coincides with the unwillingness to be thorough in the treatment of social material. *Five-Star Final* overpitched its tragedy—stretched it beyond the point of elasticity—neutralized the indictment with humor and terminated the drama with a cute remark. Of competence there was much, a competence of verve and of a quality superior to the blue-print workmanship of a Frank Capra, for instance. *I am a Fugitive* is too spectacular at times, the chain-gang is clustered in two sequences of the film to serve as a lavish background for the innocent prisoner played honorably by Paul Muni. By the end of the picture we are thinking not at all of the chain-gang but of the fugitive, and mainly because he has been made a man of the hour whose hour is destroyed by the vindictiveness of a state, which breaks the promise exacted by the insistence of the popular voice. It is in its characterization of the state (through governor et al) that the picture achieves its main importance. Were it not for the inspired conclusion, when the fugitive's agonized face disappears in the mist, I doubt that the antecedent action would be recalled. Not often does a last image work retroactively *in favor of* the narrative. The "shocker" at the end of *The Public Enemy* is memorable solely for its own violence. . . The reason for the existence of a medievalism

like the chain-gang is not indicated in *I am a Fugitive*, as it was in *Hell's Highway*. If these two films could have been mixed for their better elements the complete chain-gang picture might have been realized. The latter film was begun by Rowland Brown and, by its first part, reassured us that we were not wrong in admiring that director's initial picture, *Quick Millions*. He seems to have the surest, cleanest directorial hand of any newcomer in the last several years, and is as resistant to curley cues as he has been to the film hierarchy. The original scenario of *Hell's Highway* had in authors Samuel Ornitz and Brown, two socially-conscious individuals, and that possibly accounts for the fact that the film has a base to start from: the chain-gang exists for the private contractor that he may have cheap labor for his competitive bid. It is this fact that *I am a Fugitive* needs. However, *Hell's Highway* absolves the state from connivance in the sweat-box; *I'm a Fugitive* provides the state as nemesis. In the latter also, a cause, unemployment, leads to a result, the chain-gang, in the instance of the central person; in the former there is no such relationship, and the central person is a cliché. Neither film avoids the picturesque, particularly in the Negro singing—operatic in the Le Roy film, vaudevillian in the Brown. Unless the singing can be related with penetration to the setting, it is dangerous diversion and is better omitted. Similarly, the scene in the hang-out in the Le Roy film between the runaway and the sympathetic girl is better omitted than presented hurriedly and lacking in the essential qualities of tenderness and poignancy, for which the film has not prepared the way and from which there is no development. In its literalness, the American movie includes every episode and renders too kaleidoscopic a film demanding scrutiny. But, for all its insufficiencies, *I am a Fugitive* is an advance in American film-content and to that extent its form is shaped. Will it be a jumping-off place for more progressive films or an end-stop? Indications point to renewed concessions by the social segment film to the aggrandisement of the personage who should be the character-convergent for the happenings. Though *The Match King* does contain some probable Kreuger data very glibly set into motion in the effrontery of Kroll ("Kr" from Kreuger "oll" from Toll) it is a delectable cad we get and not a peak-phenomenon of egregious economy in collapse. Any suggestion of a possible deduction of general pertinence is subdued, although in the bribery of the Polish minister something did slip through. *Silver Dollar* is the tale of an all-to-human superman and not the striking instance of the battle of the financiers. The defeat of silver is treated almost as a hastily improvised snubbing of Yates Martin (H. A. A. Tabor in reality), whose vulgarity, we are somehow left to feel, brought on the defeat.

January 3rd.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

FAN MALES

We write and write, we what-are-called critics (it is a pity there is no word that means "scientific enjoyer"), and we develop our theories, which may or may not be true, because we don't often meet the Men Who Do Things, who, consequently, Know.

So what can it mean to us when Lubitsch, Lloyd and Father Fairbanks are to be seen and spoken to? What shan't we learn, what tips shan't we pick up, what general idea not form? Listen and see. Taking them in order; first, Lubitsch.

The Savoy. A swelegant room, clustered with film-critics at tea, who either nibble sandwiches as if they were steaks or else say "No gee-gaws for me," and fall to discussing this morning's show or yesterday's "Express" article. Repeated again and again, a cunning use of sound, rises and buzzes what each of them knows, "These 'do's' are no use to me." All very back-scene of a Lubitsch comedy. What a pity Jeannette Macdonald isn't a lady film-critic. No one thinks of that. They would make Chevalier one instead. We are told Herr Lubitsch is sorry to be late, he is in his bath. What a pity it is not Jeannette Macdonald we are waiting to see, swinging in on a portable grand staircase she brings out of her bag, or maybe being wheeled in in her bath, singing. . . . The doors open, and it is not she. No, it is the power behind her throne. Lubitsch the eulogised, the approved, the understood, the successful. The master. He is small, dark, suggesting olive-wood and olive-oil. Suggesting also a leprechaun, with his bright little eyes, his darting movements, small, genial, sly. He goes round each tea-table. That is very polite. No mass-introduction for him. Then he retires to a corner and the tea-table occupants swoop to him in a rush, leaving the tables, as they have long left the plates, empty. That would be a pretty shot.

And what does he say, what does he think, this man whose *Love Parade* set the film free again from sound, whose every film has added some new point of style to screen-vocabulary? He says that Herbert Marshall has a mellowness and malleability which are rare to find in a man; that he has no wish to make an operatic film, for opera is old-fashioned now, "even in the opera-house." He talks of the way he found Jeannette Macdonald. There were no single stars in Hollywood to suit. Eighty tests were taken of stage stars in New York. Lubitsch saw twenty; the twentieth was Jeannette Mac; he hopped on a train for Chicago, where she was performing, so as to see her assured and at home in her medium. From this emerges the fact that tests are cold, and do not bring out just the facet of personality you may want. Actors have to be seen doing their stuff, confident and at work. He says that he wants no more technical innovations; we have enough, and he wants to



Asta Nielsen in her first sound-film, "Vera Holgk and Her Daughter." A Märkische-Film, directed by Erich Waschneck. Photos by Hans Casparius.

Asta Nielsen dans son premier film parlant : "Vera Holgk et sa fille." Un film Märkische réalisé par Erich Waschneck. Photos de Hans Casparius.

Asta Nielsen in ihrem ersten Tonfilm "Vera Holgk und ihre Tochter." Ein Märkischer Film : Regie Erich Waschneck. Photos von Hans Casparius.



learn how to use them. (See *Trouble in Paradise*, one agrees that he seems to know every trick.) Here, in this statement, a hint that he sees all the paraphernalia of the studio, screen and laboratory and cutting-room as writers see words, to be combined, to be juxtaposed, to be put into order, to make of that order something none of them have separately, together. For the rest, what does one get? The idea back of his mind in his work? Methods? Ambitions? Naturally not. Who is going to give anything away? I said, a sly guy. An emigrant effect. Small, witty, and not outwardly winning. Clearly, he will play in his work with the splendour and space he did not have at the start and which even now are not quite real to him. Shut doors . . . how marvellous to open them! Staircases . . . how wonderful to be able to come down and not feel ridiculous! Back of all, fear—wrapped up in size. Defence motive. And then at the last, the statement that the "Lubitsch touch" (I know, but it was inevitable) is worked out on paper. Only very rarely is there improvisation.

I get the same from Harold Lloyd. He too is in his bath. I met his secretary, who is not much further advanced than himself. Reason—they only arrived from France last night. Suitcases, labels, piled clothes litter the Dorchester décor. The phone goes. Some paper has said Mr. Lloyd will appear at some cinema with Jack Payne. That is a good one. Mr. Lloyd will appear at no cinema and does not know who Jack Payne is. That also is a good one. For Jack Payne. The clock goes on. The secretary, who might also be his bodyguard, talks. The Dorchester's smallest page-boy comes in with the world's largest typewriter. It is announced that Mr. Lloyd will soon be ready. We light our second cigarette. The secretary is by this time tying his tie. Did I say he was dressing? Lloyd comes in, in a pale blue tailored dressing gown, shoots to a dressing-stool, apologises with a brief recital of night-life, and asks what sort of story we would like. I tell him, and out of it comes, first, the fact that he too does not improvise. (I am sure these facts will be greeted with wild excitement by amateur film societies). *Welcome Danger* was begun in the middle, worked back to the start, and then, then the end was devised. That cannot be done with talkies. All gags are worked out on paper now. "If you improvise in talkies, you'd have to start improvising your audience." Shooting does not take long. It is the story that takes the time—finding it and preparing it. By that time, news has got round and other studios are making similar stories. There were two stories bought before *Movie Crazy* was hit on.

It appears that Lloyd hankered after the story eventually made by Keaton as *Speakeasily*. It was not a Keaton part, and Keaton knew it. It was a Lloyd part, but Metro had it, and would not let Lloyd buy it. Instead, they offered him the part. Being tied up with Paramount, he could not accept. So *Speakeasily* was made, unrecognisable from the



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Asta Nielsen dans son premier film parlant : "Vera Holgk et sa fille." Un film Märkische réalisé par Erich Waschneck. Photos by Hans Casparius.

Asta Nielsen in ihrem ersten Tonfilm "Vera Holgk und ihre Tochter." Ein Märkischer Film ; Regie Erich Waschneck. Photos von Hans Casparius.



story as it had attracted him, missing the possibilities he'd seen in it, but using enough of the framework to prevent him doing anything similar.

A few points on *Movie Crazy* emerged. It has seventy per cent. action, and thirty per cent. dialogue, which he thinks about right. I suggested that is because the thirty per cent. talk is already tolerably well explained by the action. He agreed maybe. *Movie Crazy* has been a great success in all countries, both dubbed and sub-titled. It is being made in a French version. He takes great impetus from this, feeling that he now knows what lines to work on for comedies with the same appeal in each country, and confessing that he was completely in the dark before. He is all agog to get back and start on his new one.

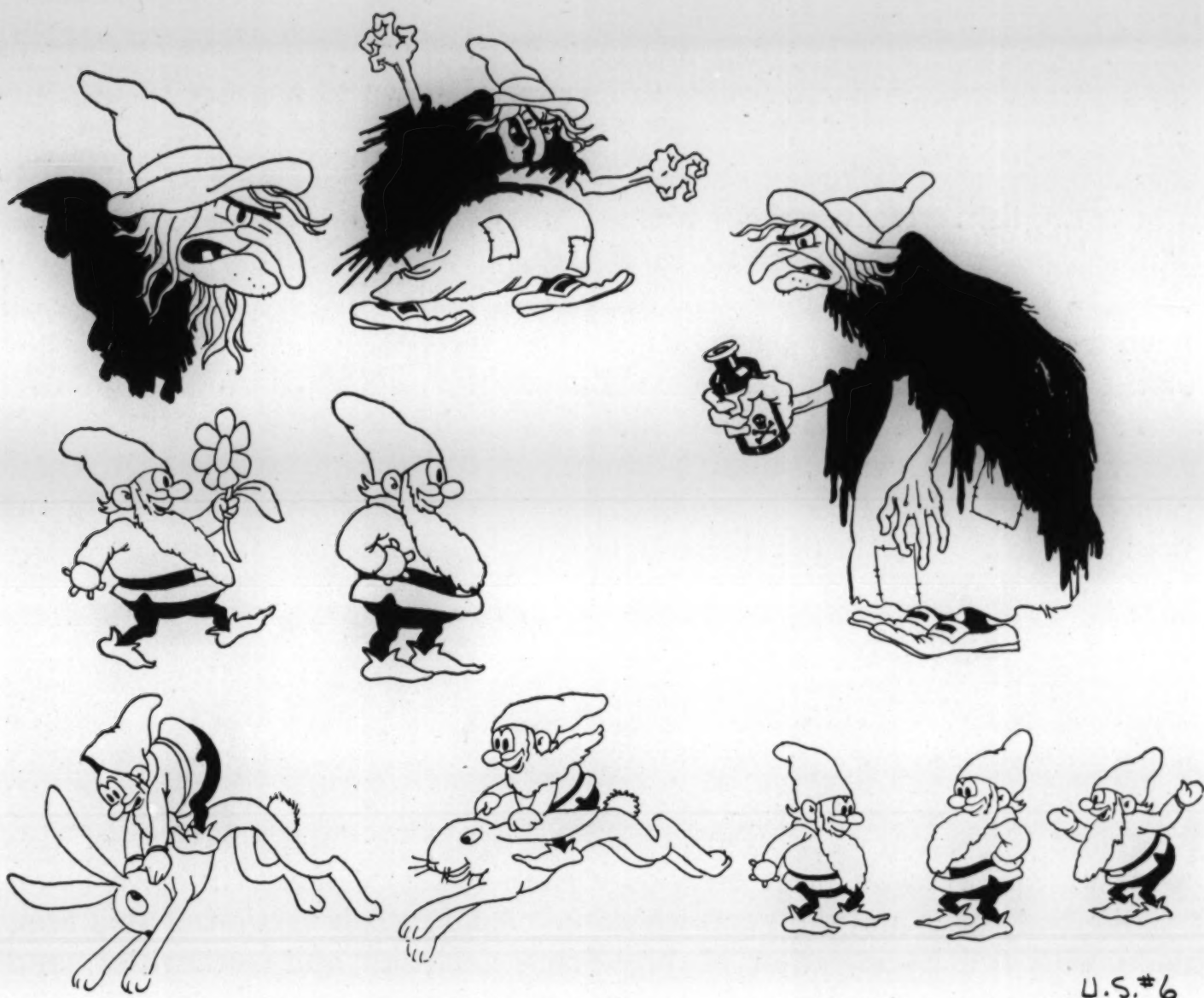
Lloyd invented the pre-view. That idea has been copied so much that popping a new picture into a programme is no longer a surprise. For *Movie Crazy*, he tried a new test. He showed it to an audience of deaf mutes. They found only two places which baffled them. This, and his foreign observation, have convinced him that he is on the right track. He thinks talk has helped comedies more than dramas, because a comedy must always have action, and so comedians are thus saved from the temptation of being too literally "hundred per cent. talkie."

Fresh from Cannes, he declared that Pabst had "a very fine film" in *Kee Hotay*. I gathered that he was slightly surprised at the scale on which Pabst was working, that he admired his direction of two versions simultaneously, was impressed by the sets, and thought George Robey was the actor taking Robey's part in the French version.

To talk to, Lloyd is gay, unaffected, enthusiastic and non-stop. He does not talk of theories, but has a strong working-sense. At the same time, he admits that no amount of money or revision can help a film if he himself does not "click" in it at the start. Unlike friend Fairbanks, he does not talk of "a story in which I can express myself," but of "the right story for me." And, also unlike Fairbanks, does not feel in the least "finished."

So now let's step over to the Ritz. (Even if one doesn't learn much, well, not so much from these film-guys, one certainly learns the insides of hotels). And where is Mr. Fairbanks? The bathroom door is open, so he cannot be pulling that gag. Wait. For twenty minutes. Then in breezes, Mr. Fairbanks, takes the floor to the manner born, brims with geniality and never stops talking; while I think he gets more like Don Alfonso every day. Which is no doubt what he wants.

Mr. Fairbanks discusses himself in terms of rhythm and tempo. This is very interesting; but it is a pity one gets so swept away that when one sees his films, one looks for too much. Mr. Fairbanks is wise not to wait for *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*. Last time he was over, it was all "formula" he was looking for. That quest is abandoned. Films have their old



U.S.#6

"Babes in the Wood." Drawings by Walt Disney for a new Technicolor "Silly Symphony."

"Bebès au bois," dessins de Walt Disney, de la série Technicolor "Silly Symphonies."

"Babies im Wald." Zeichnungen von Walt Disney für eine neue Technicolor "Silly Symphony."

mobility and perhaps more, but he, he has "not quite the necessary abandon." He is complimented on his graceful retirement, but denies it, hedging with "suspended activity," but admitting that the films he throws off in his spare time are "sops to his conscience" (they'd lie heavy on mine, but then, I'm not an athlete). All the talk is a very good line and mixed up with remarks about *Words and Music* travel, London ("the only town where depression is laughed at. Your night-clubs are full, everything's going on in excellent shape, magnificent, great, fine"), it makes a grand noise and keeps one busy scribbling.

It boils down to the fact that the Fairbanks tempo which he thought was beyond talkie, he now thinks is beyond him. A delicately wistful Mr. Fairbanks, combining the boyishness of the Upper Fifth with the savoir-faire of the Upper Ten. Mary comes through on the 'phone, and he has to dress for his second visit to *Words and Music*, so we leave.

The most interesting fact was that, answering my anxious enquiry as to Japanese talkies and refusing to be pinned down to a study of Oriental cinema that he did not make, he says the Japanese cannot have enough English-speaking talkies. They attend with dictionary and grammar, to study English. Heaven help them if they hit Lilian Harvey or Leslie Fuller! But there's plenty to learn from Japan, if not from the fan males, the boys we are mad about, the actual touch with the studio. For what have we learnt? Nothing at all, unless we have been able to get a picture of the man to see behind the next film each of them makes. Well, you don't expect film-men to discuss their ideas. That's what they make film from. And meanwhile, almost unnoticed by the press, two German cameramen were in London, ending their task of quite simply filming the British Isles. With the help of the Travel Association, Herren Koch and Lutz, of the Doering-Film-Werke, Hannover, spent three months filming factories, places of scenic or historic interest, for a sound-film of 7,000 feet to be shown on the Ufa circuit through the German-speaking countries and Norddeutscher Lloyd liners. They shot 25,000 feet a straight, serious film, with no fun about Mr. This or That, no sham story or artificial adventure. They said they found nothing in England the least like Germany; their film should bring out a detached view of this country. They were most struck by English friendliness, English country, the bad coffee and the good whiskey. An English version of this film, made with full co-operation of big firms, factories and authorities, and undertaken with a purpose, will be prepared for this country. Two gossip-notes; Herr Koch, allowed in the guard's van for shots, hung his coat by mistake on the emergency brake, and the train stopped. The train was the Flying Scotsman. And—they got the King returning from Sandringham, but are not allowed to use it, as you may not photograph Royalty unawares; so bits from news-reels, made with permission, will be put in instead. Says We, if I may say so.

ROBERT HERRING.



The first Yiddish film by Shpiss, "The Return of Nathan Becker."

"Le retour de Nathan Becker," premier film Yiddish de Shpiss.

Der erste jiddische Film von Shpiss, "Die Rückkehr des Nathan Becker."

A FILM ACTOR

Everyone theorises about film direction in these days; acting is left oddly alone. We praise this or that player; we are agreed that Jannings, Krauss, Körtner, a few others, are great actors; we go no further. But in the intervals of seeing and admiring their films, we faintly suspect that film acting is no good. In the principle there is something wrong. Pudovkin, when he raised his "Out with the Actor" cry, matched a suspicion that was already there. The documentary, the travel-film, the German peasant idyll and the Soviet mass idyll, offered a kind of escape, but not exactly a solution, for we felt that it would be foolish to restrict to them the field of the cinema. Meanwhile the films of great acting go on, and we go to them, and grow more and more suspicious.

From the player's point of view, the art is undoubted; but from the point of view of cinema . . .? Look at Laughton in *Payment Deferred*, at Jannings in almost any of his star-films, the end of *The Blue Angel*, for

instance; is that cinema? You may blame it on the director, say he should have dominated them, controlled them; but could he? Can anyone interfere with great realistic acting, a patiently constructed edifice, which the removal of one brick would bring crashing down in ruins?

All questions with no answer: and yet it is an important matter: it is, in fact, at the very root of a world-cinema which is basing itself on great realistic acting, or the nearest approach to that ideal which it can manage. Must the actor stay to make only rubbish, and the documentaries and abstractions share between them all the film meaning in the world?

In Germany, a long time ago as it now seems, they had an Expressionist school, chiefly on the stage but tricking now and then on the screen, where *Caligari* was its fine flower. It did silly things, and was soon dated, but it produced a theory of film acting which has since been almost lost. It has, in fact, only one successful and influential screen survivor, one actor who works out its principles all by himself—Conrad Veidt. And Veidt has developed away from it since the days of *Caligari*, the days when Reinhardt and Wiene and Galeen and the rest of them believed in light and line, symbol and angle. But he has not developed in the directions of the realists; that is the point.

Its own supporters could not define Expressionism; you may call it plastic symbolism, if you like; impressionism would be a closer word. Its aim boiled down to this; the imagination of the audience must be stimulated to do most of the work for itself. The designer gave us a black wall, a grey wall, and a white hole; we saw a sinister attic lit by a ray of hope. The director made us peer from above on a pale slit of an alley, with four scudding figures; we saw a whole town in uproar. And the actor, in his turn, gave us the minimum; a single wide gesture, a shoulder, a back, replaced all the painstaking close-ups in which great realistic acting gets itself across.

And it worked—that was the miracle. It matched a principle inherent in the cinema—the principle of suggestion. For we know that after the very early days when the cinema was praised for showing us everything where the stage could show only a part, it was found that the real advantage of the cinema was to show only a part where the stage showed everything. It is, in fact, a highly eclectic form, and thus leaves to the imagination the extraordinary scope which makes a great film our most stimulating intellectual exercise. It is essentially austere; it gives us the minimum; we do the rest for ourselves. The Russian cinema is one long sermon on this theme.

This, perhaps, is why we feel that realistic acting will not do. It goes counter to this idea of suggestion. It takes us step by step, pedantically, along a road we could travel alone. The Expressionist actor matched his medium. Conrad Veidt matches it to-day. In spite of his development towards an inevitably more human and personal technique; we never, even

in his least successful films, have that embarrassing sense of something incongruous, brilliant but foreign to the medium, true to life but not to the life of the screen.

Age your Expressionist, soften him by sympathy and experience, and you have a romantic. Indeed, Expressionism, underneath its brilliantly intellectual surface, contained already the elements of romance. Veidt is now a romantic actor; he is at home in the costume fairy-tale of *The Last Company* or *The Black Hussar*, though he has more to give than they can take. Planted among the English drawing-room cast of *Rome Express*, he takes on the disconcerting air of a naughty magician, throwing the film's Baedeker realism out of focus whenever he appears. But in the hands of a sympathetic German director, who understands his peculiar quality, can develop and exaggerate his very unreality—his great physical height, the drawn mask of his face, the rhythm of his gestures, above all, his power of translating into broad movement and not into look or speech the emotions of a part—Veidt stands alone as the one perfectly cinematic actor on the screen.

Even so, he can be no more than a hint, a mere example in the discussion. You could not breed a whole school of perfectly cinematic actors merely by copying him. The intellectual problem of film acting has to be faced, to be reasoned out and theorised. Direction has been universally theorised, as is right; of the two it is the more important. But acting has too often held up or negated direction to be left to work out its principles by itself.

There is, and always will be, an element of magic in the cinema; which is, a romantic way of saying that it is reality more stylised, more highly organised, more aesthetic than the reality of physical daily life. And until the actor finds the way to make himself magical too, he has no home in the other world that lies across the screen.

ELIZABETH COXHEAD.



The first Yiddish film by Shpiss, "The Return of Nathan Becker."

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PUBLISHED SCENARIOS

This is not to argue the æsthetic toss: it is merely in a practical way to discuss the publication of scenarios: of films made, or to be made.

Personally, and one can't do better than that, I should love a copy of the script of *Jeanne Ney*, and to be able to recreate at any time my impressions of that film, to take an example. It will not be long before scenarios are regularly published: now the idea is a little strange, as was the idea of publishing stage plays in Elizabethan times. No one then thought they would stand up on their own without the traffic of the boards. It will be all to the advantage of the original writer: the pioneer will be able to get a hearing—a printed book carrying more weight than a typed MS.—especially if the critics, film and literary, give him a show. The book sales would guarantee some return even if the script was never purchased for production. Also it would be a convenience for the studios to be able to purchase ready made scenarios, and a good press might encourage them

to tackle unusual subjects. The fact of publication would be some indication of ability, at any rate, and would lift competent work out of the junk basket, where now it must hob-nob with the dog-eared and weary bundles of the literary agencies ("stage and film rights negotiated"). Success in book form, also, should stiffen the price for the author. And we are talking of original scenarios, conceived as cinema, and not of best selling novels and plays.

Further, publication of scenarios would help to extend the cinema consciousness of the public.

These thoughts are occasioned by the publication of an unshot scenario, *Bombay Riots*, by C. Denis Pegge. This book has already been reviewed in *Close Up*, and in the remarks that follow I am only concerned with that book as an example. *Bombay Riots* is important because of its intention: it does seriously set to work to find a suitable mechanism. *The King Who was a King* had remarkably few repercussions, nor was one surprised. The publication of *Sunshine Susie*, the plums of which were published in shooting script form in the Daily Express, can only be looked upon as a novelty stunt, though, perhaps, there may be seen some sort of weather-cock in that.

If we grant that the intention is laudable, the question of form arises. How, for instance, could the film *Jeanne Ney* be reproduced on paper? The actual working script would no doubt be an interesting document. But there is so much *ad hoc* alteration on the floor of even the fullest script that perhaps a more satisfactory result would be achieved if the published scenario was deduced from the film as finally taken and cut. For we do not just want a blue-print, we are after a work of art, even if a compromise: something that is shapely, with some literary form and style.

Mr. Pegge makes a great show of technique: we have our scenes sorted out, numbered, coloured with sound, and the exact duration in seconds calculated. This is all very well for scenes of long duration and slow tempo, but the reader endures unnecessary hardship when the cutting is swift or complex. It is also academic: in practice a director prefers to say:

Scenes 203-233. Quick shots of native women dancing: arms, legs, bangles. Cut in with shots of palm trees in wind, and boats rocking on lagoon. (N.B. Try and persuade Harry to keep camera low).

rather than to work it all out elaborately on paper. Because the real artist knows when to apply rule of thumb methods.

The method of *Bombay Riots*, then, is not really justified by a plea of practicality: if the intention is to create in the mind of the reader the effect of the film (which is not in practice visualised as a chain of discrete "shots," but as a flow, a flood or a movement) this form is still less justified. Again, let me say that I am only concerned with the method that Mr. Pegge has chosen, one of several possible ones. Let us now have an example: for several pages there are quick shots of this nature:



*Production still from this year's Ufa superfilm—"F. P. One." Production
Erich Pommer, direction, Karl Hartl.*

*Une scène de travail dans le film extraordinaire de la Ufa de cette année—
"I. F. 1 ne répond pas." Production Erich Pommer, regie Karl Hartl.*

*Werkfoto aus dem diesjährigen Spitzenfilm der Erich Pommer, Production
der Ufa, "F. P. 1. antwortet nicht."*

Another ground level view across the riot at its height. Short duration.
Clamour continuing.

570-2½ ins.

The arrested picture of 421: the cleared conglomeration; Jackson with raised stick. Flash.

Clamour continuing.

571-1 in.

Ground level view of riot. A flash.

Clamour continuing.

572-1 in.

And so on. To appreciate the effect of this riot scene some minutes of earnest ratiocination are required, several pages have to be turned to assimilate slowly a blow-of-the-eye which in practice would have fled by in five seconds. The eye, of course, is quicker than the ear and the tongue (whose leisure we await even when reading to ourselves), and a film is not a moving Tate Gallery, or a landscape album of the Scottish highlands.

In the following passage, taken from an experiment in this new form, one may see an alternative method. The action is conceived in terms of cinema, but written down with an eye to verbal effect:

The two girls pad on in their silent sand-shoes down the zig-zag towards the bay, first towards the lighthouse, and then away from the lighthouse and towards the Marine Hotel, and then away from the Marine Hotel and towards the lighthouse, and meanwhile Mr. Curtis goes round and round his heap of cement, mixing it all up, and Tomlinson moves down the row of dibbles with the cabbage plants.

This, perhaps, interprets three different sorts of movement better than if they were analysed into twenty cross cut shots.

But there is a further major difficulty, one that may prove to stump us entirely in the end. Imagine a shot of a wineglass held in a hand, which revolves it slowly until it dissolves or "turns" into a pool of water ringed by a dropped stone. The images only hold the screen for perhaps three seconds, yet even from that simple shot the eye had received many varied, complex and rich stimuli, which, if catalogued in words, would take half an hour to read. The eye, for instance, has assimilated immediately the changing flecks of light on the finger nails, the way in which they progress in an opposite direction to the high light on the rim of the glass—and so on and so on. Words, in fact, are really not much good in describing cinema. But they are *some* good, the attempt is still valuable, and particularly if the words are used with poetic compression and suggestion. For that we must cut away our stage directions of scene numbers, and try and give duration, tempo, colour, etc., *intrinsically*.

The following passage from *Few Are Chosen*, by Oswald Blakeston, describes a scene in a bar. This style of highly sensitive reporting is, in one direction at least, essentially cinema.

Music works through Charlie's body, to tapping fingers. Let's sit on the dangerous sofa. Do you know when the show ends? Don't think, gents, that I ask from any ulterior motive; I am an old player at the Abbey Theatre. Winding up an oblong wrist-watch, eyes doing those things. Music works through Charlie's body, orchestrating the sounds and dialogue. A loud march (Japanese acrobats) dissolves into the drink in bubbles. Scowls, vendettas, stilettos. Collegiate bar, my sweet, in the Kurfürstendam; cocktail shakers with half the hair sleeked, the other half puffed, one takes one's choice, evidently. Can you open this cigarette case? (Heavy refulgence). Exactly what I wanted. Henri brings an extra suit-case for presents. Sense of plush, music from the cymbals, feverish combat; tide over Charlie.

This was not written, of course, with an eye to the camera: it is literary. It suggests, however, a writer whose natural view point and attitude to life is "cinema": an acceptance that becomes a morality because of its completeness. Nor is it by chance that the cinema is a natural mode of expression in this age.

Without being doctrinaire I suggest, to return to our point, that the best way to tackle this problem of translating cinema into words is as follows: first, conceive the subject in camera angles and shots: write, in fact, a scenario. Then, translate the technical score into words chosen so that their rhythm, proportion and colour *intrinsically* (that is the keynote) recreate the movement, duration and general effect—smoothness, hardness, recession and so forth—of the shifting scenes. According to the subject the result would vary from something that approximates to a scenario to a complete dissolution, an evocative word pattern, merely.

ROGER BURFORD.



Annabella in René Clair's latest film, "14th July." Photo : Tobis.

Annabella dans le dernier film de René Clair : "14 Juillet." Photo : Tobis.

Annabella in René Clairs letztem Film "14. Juli." Photo : Tobis.

THREE PARIS FILMS

Chance willed that two films with the same theme: Paris were presented on the same day.

One was *14th July*, by René Clair, the other *Paris Mirages*, the first comedy of Fédor Ozep, director of *The Yellow Ticket*, *The Brothers Karamazoff*, etc.

Both show a special aspect of this eternal city, both abstain from partizanship.

The cinema to-day suffers from a *crise de courage*. Talented directors spin old stories which can mean nothing to us unless for special reasons. Clair and Ozep are not the only ones. All directors who know their job have no courage to say what they think.

The case of Fédor Ozep is perhaps apart. For the first time in France (after having made a French version of *Karamazoff* he was allowed by one of the big firms to make a film after his own scenario. (The idea of the scenario is, incidentally, that of Victor Trivas, maker of *No Man's Land*, so I hear). But, given permission, difficulties began. Fear on the part of the producers of upsetting the French temper if this fantasy on Paris were



"Mirages de Paris." Décor by Andreyev and d'Agnettand. Photo : Film Pathé-Natan.

"Mirages de Paris." Décor d'Andreyev et Agnettand. Photo : Pathé-Natan.

Mirages de Paris. Dekeration von Andreyev und d'Agnettand. Photo : Film Pathé-Natan.

shown, fear, justified, of the press and public reaction, that the charm of this fantasy lay in the fact that it presented an unreal Paris, that it showed the first contact of a foreign artist with this city of a hundred thousand faces, *insuffisants* actors, music a shade too subtle in the revue scenes, etc., etc.—fear always of wounding a ridiculous self-esteem.

Thus Ozep has every excuse. His intentions were nipped in the bud. The film, however, deserves to be seen, for it shows yet again what can be done with talkies if one takes the trouble to think.

Paris Mirages is a brilliant work, a film which should be shown to all students of cinema technics. Ozep reveals extraordinary faculty for montage—that Russian touch!

14th July is much more complex. For the first time I am convinced that Clair too, belongs to that class of directors who are "obsessed." By obsessed, I mean those who have something to say, that it must be said in film, and that they continually repeat it. In various ways, Stroheim, Vidor, Pabst, Fejos (at moments), Sternberg (sometimes) are in this category.

They interest us. They are men, not merely manufacturers of



"Mirages de Paris." Décor by Andreyev and d'Agnettand. Photo : Film Pathé-Natan.

"Mirages de Paris." Décor d'Andreyev et Agnettand. Photo : Pathé-Natan.

Mirages de Paris. Dekoration von Andreyev und d'Agnettand. Photo : Film Pathé-Natan.

ephemeral film-stuff. Behind what we see, we sense the more or less timid desire of heart and spirit to be free of what enchains.

Clair, coming from a bourgeois French family, has for a long time striven to shake off this milieu. Really a feeble man, ill perhaps, depleted, and an intellectual. And well he knows it. He is French, in the special and full connotation of the word, with all its faults and exceptional qualities. And in all his films he has sought to escape from the world he knows, showing us old and poor corners of Montmartre, and simple, poor people whom he knows only in so far as he desires to be one of them.

And he is aware that he will never be able to emerge from his bourgeois, intellectual circle. Then he flies off into the unreal-realism of his films, where he may live vicariously the life which is forbidden him.

After a long siege, he is able, more or less, to be quite free on the production side. It is for this reason that he makes only one film each year, one which is specially and completely his own work. It is he who writes his own scenarios, he who cuts the film, he who directs, he who allows no actor to play in any way other than that minimum which shall safeguard the unity of his work, he who does the mounting.



"Mirages de Paris." Décor by Andreyev and d'Agnettand. Photo: Film Pathé-Natan.

"Mirages de Paris." Décor d'Andreyev et Agnettand. Photo : Pathé-Natan.

Mirages de Paris. Dekoration von Andreyev und d'Agnettand. Photo : Film Pathé-Natan.

In *14th July* (a good commercial title, with little bearing on the content) he reveals that he has arrived at complete mastery of this graceless material called film.

Love of Jean (Georges Rigaud) and Anna (Annabella, who has never been so tender and so charming); friendship of his friend (Raymond Cordy, who once more is a truculent chauffeur), and the intervention of a sort of *deus ex machina*, Paul Olivier (who plays one of those distinguished tipplers, and who, remaining quite unreal, achieves a charm of unspeakable reality). Finally the vamp (Pola Illery) and her two accomplices, two luckless ruffians (Raymond Aimos and Thomy Bourdelle).

We know from the start that Jean and Anna will have to demonstrate proofs of their love, that the vamp, Pola, will do her best to make a mess of them, and that all will end well. But that is not so important. What is important is the almost supernatural life with which Clair invests these puppets.

Yes, we say, Clair is a great poet! Critics will possibly say he is influenced by Chaplin, by the Marx Brothers—it is possible. Personally my opinion is he is influenced by the poet, René Clair.



Julian Duvivier's film, "Allo, Berlin? Ici Paris!"
Du dernier film de Duvivier : "Allo, Berlin? Ici Paris!"
Julian Duviviers Film "Allo Berlin? Ici Paris!"

The delicious scene in which, after an amorous disillusionment, Anna goes home and knocks over a small boy who starts to cry, must be mentioned. Anna gets to work to comfort the child. "Well, it's over. Don't go on crying, it's over!" And, with tears streaming slowly from her eyes, we realise that these words, spoken to the boy, are really spoken to herself, who stands in greater need of consolation. There are scenes of delicious humour — played by Olivier, always superb when directed by Clair, and Raymond Cordy, the chauffeur, who, with Clair, is not vulgar any more, only truculent. All the minor parts, too, have an adroit and personal appeal.

In short, it is a true René Clair success! Even Perinal, who sometimes draws too much attention to herself, is, this time, discreet, subservient to the whole, while the Montmartre décors (by Meerson) are perfectly in key.

The abused word "personality" can here be justly employed. Clair is a personality in the cinema world, where lack of personality is at a premium. That is why I expressed in the beginning my disappointment that he did not bite into a more violent theme. Maybe he is waiting for a more propitious moment.

At all events, I did not believe that he would have presented a film of such astonishing maturity. The unjust criticisms which could be hurled against it would have to remain insensible to the underlying suffering, the expression of which is the artist's privilege.

The third film, called *Hallo Berlin, Paris Speaking*, by Julien Duvivier, was made in Germany in one version only, with dialogue half in German, half in French, and records the adventures of two telephone operators who fall in love while making Paris-Berlin connections. But another friend takes the place of the nice young man, and another girl, *un peu légère*, meets the nice young man when he arrives late, in Paris. In the end, everything adjusts.

Duvivier, however, uses this intrigue to show once more how a film can be made which can be perfectly understood both by French and German people. And he depicts a Paris such as a foreign tourist would see it, that is to say, almost not at all, in one of the too-speedy cars of Thomas Cook! And how a German sees it, who does not speak French, and goes for hour-long walks in places which could exist in any town on earth.

Duvivier is a very good film craftsman, and reveals in this film qualities far superior to those evinced by previous works. This time, apart from one or two minor errors of taste, he establishes a comprehension of the sound-film, the value of silence, etc., and in other respects the subject permits a simultaneity in current events of the world—this is well managed. Value is given to the work which by far surpasses the story of petty intrigue and plot and counterplot.

With the public this film, too, had little acclaim. Meanwhile I am persuaded that Duvivier will make what is called an honourable career! Important enough in its way! For the mediocre producer holds always in horror a subject of intelligent worth, and Duvivier, who until now has always directed somewhat vulgar melodramas, will maybe continue to make real films.

Paris, January, 1933.

JEAN LENAUER.



"Ikino-Kami Ogasawara," directed by Sadao Yamanaka.

"Ikino-Kami-Ogasawara," de Sadao Yamanaka.

"Ikino-Kami Ogasawara." Regie : Sadao Yamanaka.

JAPANESE FILM PROBLEMS, 1932

- A. Sadao Yamanaka as a new figure.
- B. Some notes on Japanese talking films.
- C. *Chûshin-gura* or *The Forty-Seven Faithful*.

A.

Sadao Yamanaka, a young director, was the greatest and most brilliant discovery of Japanese cinema in 1932. He made six feature films during the year—which perhaps you may think is a praiseworthy production output—not one of them having failed to draw discussion and acclaim from the critics.

As a matter of fact, no other Japanese director—with the possible exception of Daisuke Itê—has been studied and analysed with more enthusiasm. It is said that he is twenty four years of age, one or two years younger than Ilya Trauberg, the renowned Soviet director.

Sadao Yamanaka, formerly a scenario-writer, made his directorial debut in February, 1932, with *Genta Isono* (a vagabond gambler) wherein he revealed promise of becoming a director of talent. After that he made, in quick succession, five pictures—*Rain of Coins*, *Ikono-Kami Ogasawara*, *A Whistling Samurai*, *A Fraudulent Buddhist*, and *Kurama Tengu*. You must know that S. Yamanaka was obliged to work with such speed because he was the only chief directorial figure in a minor film company, named Kanjuro Production Company.

All his pictures are characterised by eminently superior film technique, by which is meant that our interest in his films is more related to his film forms than to his material content. Detailed comment on his technological merits (i.e., his rhythmic construction with straight cuts, emotional expression of picturesque frames cut in with titles—sometimes spoken titles, sometimes even verse—adoption of unusual camera angles to give pictures stereoscopic effect, his peculiar manner of connecting one scene with the following, etc., all that contributes to distinguish him as a great technician) would fill a book!

One of his directorial resources which I like best is that he never permits his actors to indulge in striking facial expression (a prevailing narrative means in most Japanese films, especially in *Jidai-Geki* films, which deal with old Japanese material, not modern stories; and a bad influence and tradition of Japanese Kabuki Theatre.)

In spite of this superior technicality, his films are not highly esteemed, because they are, so to speak, *unreal*, they are wanting in what relates to actuality. It is true that in the depiction of love scenes he shows great adroitness, and is equally skillful in constructing a scenario, but there it ends. His success in *Rain of Coins* (which is a love story, a pathetic romance of a restaurant girl and a fireman—considered to be his best) and



"Spring and a Girl," a talking-film directed by Tomotaka Tazaka—well received if not enthusiastically.

"Une fille au printemps," film parlant réalisé par Tomotaka Tasaka, accueilli favorablement sinon avec enthousiasme.

"Frühling und ein Mädchen," ein Sprechfilm unter der Regie von Tomotaka Tazaka—wurde freundlich, wenn auch nicht allzu begeistert aufgenommen.

his failure in *Ikino-Kami Ogasawara* (a great political leader of the Tokugawa Government who struggles with the intricate political problems to which Old Japan has been exposed) vindicate that, I think.

At present most Japanese critics score over the director as, whilst he may possibly continue to be a great story-teller, he can hardly produce film-art worthy of the name.

B.

The Japanese talking picture is making very slow progress. This year we had, (though I am not absolutely certain of the number) more than fifteen talkies. Assuming that Japan has produced six hundred pictures this year (last year according to the Kinema-Jumpo we had 598 features) then the number of talkies published in 1932 amounts to only 2.5 per cent. of the total figure of pictures made, and, what is more depressing, we cannot find a single talkie comparable with the European or American masterpieces from viewpoints purely technological and artistic.

The drawbacks are attributable to many causes, but firstly and dominantly, to the financial condition of Japanese cinema which is forever destined, on account of the national peculiarity, not to fit foreign markets, and is, therefore, prevented from spending as much money on film production as in occidental countries. Making a talkie needs more money than making a silent film and projecting a talkie needs new equipment. Moreover, business depression is felt very acutely in the film trade. These aspects prevent a film producing company from making a talkie and a film exhibitor from buying a sound film apparatus. The second cause is that few directors understand a talking picture as the more profound form of film art, if they know a little of counterpoint, parallelism and such like; although they may know all about sound technics, they don't understand a talking picture as a new, greater totality. A director ventured to make a talking Japanese adaptation of *Sunrise*, the famous silent film by the late F. W. Murnau, only to testify to the truth that sound is unnecessary and surplus for the expression of the material content of *Sunrise*. Another director made a musical film which expressed nothing more than its theme songs alone expressed, a talking film which is qualified to amuse blind spectators. Very soon after René Clair's *Sous les Toits de Paris* was shown, we were much surprised to see in the opening scene of almost every Japanese talkie a camera which tracked forward from a higher to a lower level and in its ending scene tracked conversely, both scenes accompanied by the theme song.



"*Rain of Coins*," directed by Sadao Yamanaka.

"*Pluie de sous*," réalisé par Sadao Yamanaka.

"*Münzenregen*." Regie : Sadao Yamanaka.



"Chûshin-gura," or "The Forty-Seven Faithful," a talking film directed by Teinosuke Kinugasa. The Kabuki theatre scene. (See article.)

"Chûshin-gura" ou "Les quarante-sept fidèles," film parlant de Teinosuke Kinugasa. Scène du Théâtre Kabuki. (voir article y relatif).

"Chûshin-gura" oder "Die 47 Getreuen," ein Sprechfilm unter der Regie von Teinosuke Kinugasa. Die Theaterszene von Kabuki. (Siehe Artikel.)

In 1932 we Japanese film critics attacked our talkies without mercy and studied why they were in so miserable a state. After all we realised that our talkie cineastes wished only to display the brilliancy of sound technics such as those already suggested by foreign talking masterpieces and that it is not a mere sound technic but the nature of a talkie as a totality that is of importance. So we abandoned any discussion on sound aesthetics in which we have indulged since the appearance of *Jazz Singer* in America in 1927. How to improve our talkies at least from the artistic side? J. Futaba, a friend of mine and one of our most promising critics, sent an S.O.S. message to the theatre art circle and suggested a Japanese talkie to be amalgamated with a Japanese theatre, believing that the present deplorable state is due to the fact that a Japanese talkie, as soon as it appeared in 1932, shook hands with Mr. René Clair, instead of embracing the theatrical form which earlier American talkies were obliged to do. I agree with him; there is no denying that a true sound film art will evolve from the phase of conflict between silent film and theatre.

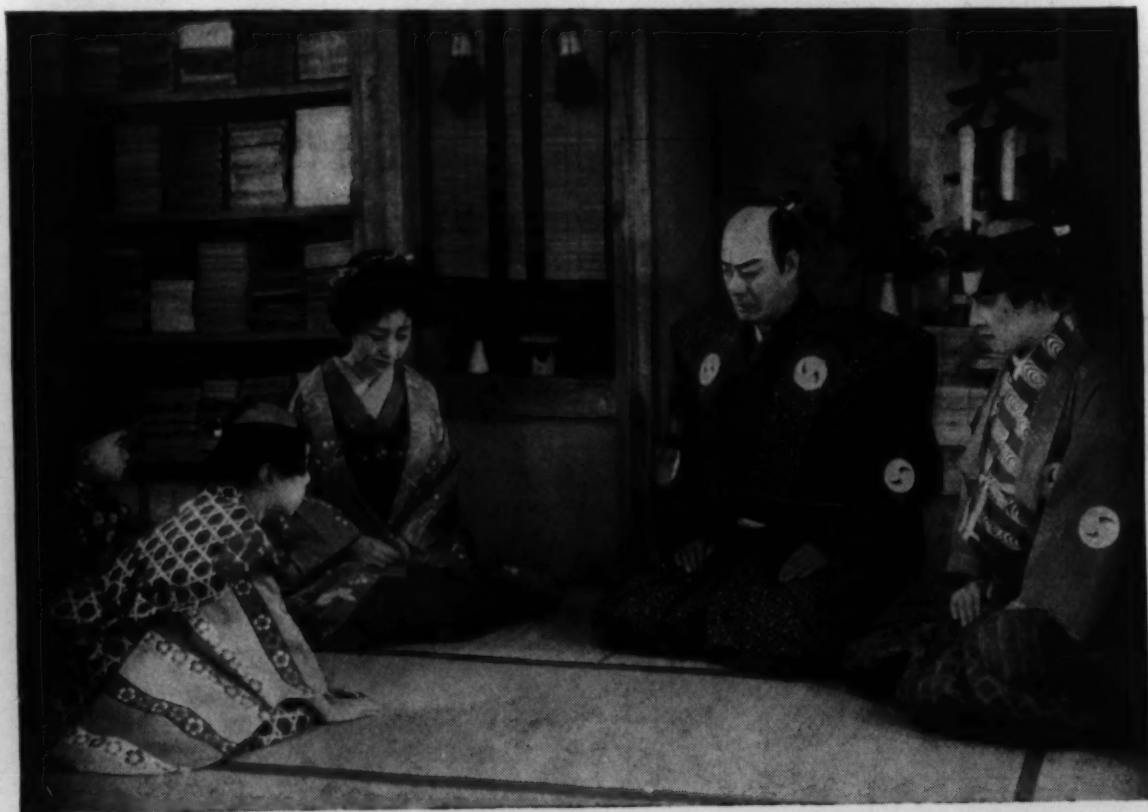
Granting that we are willing to enter into friendly relationship with the Japanese theatre, what in the world has this newly acquired friend got to help our cinema? It is a great misfortune that at present we have no valuable modern theatre-art groups and so no great theatre directors, such as Max Reinhardt, or Meyerhold or Reuben Mamoulian and furthermore that our old theatre *Kabuki* is an art rather of a few actors than of a director.

Here I will suggest a chance in the near future to describe new developments of our talking pictures. Up to this date we have only two talkies that deserve consideration; one is *Madam and Wife*, the first Japanese talkie (1931) directed by Heinosuke Gosho, the other *Chûshingura*, the latest talkie directed by Teinosuke Kinugasa.

C.

The final sensation of Japanese cinema 1932 was *Chûshingura*, or *The Forty Seven Faithful*, (a Shochiku Kinema Company production directed by Teinosuke Kinugasa whom you will remember as the director of *Under the Shadow of Yoshiwara* and *Before Daybreak*) because it has a colossal length of 20 reels and, what is more important, because it is a talking picture.

Chûshingura is one of the most well known and favourite national sagas which occurred in the feudal days of Japan. *Asano*, a provincial lord,



"*Chûshin-gura*," or "*The Forty-Seven Faithful*," a talking film directed by Teinosuke Kinugasa.

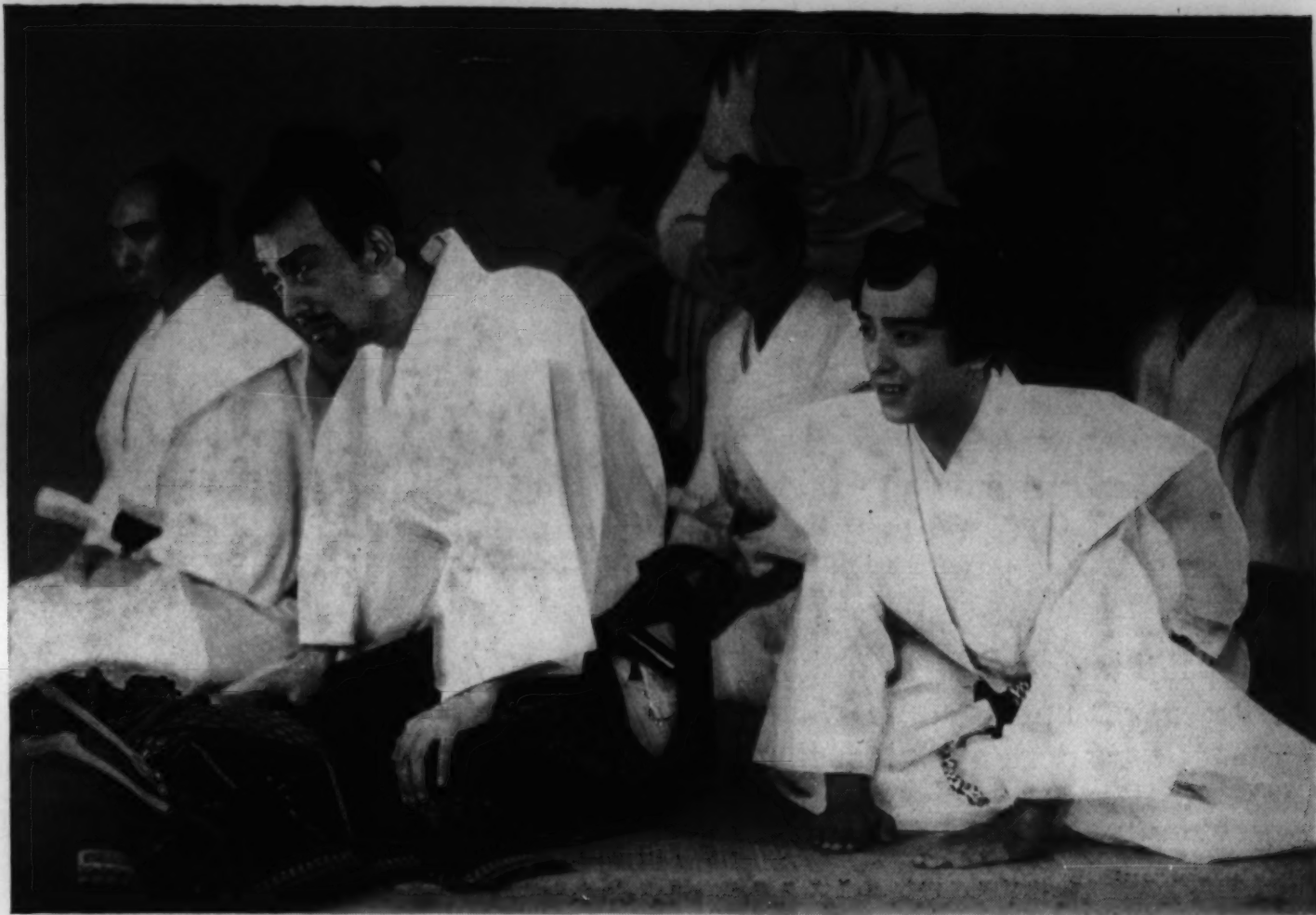
"*Chûshin-gura*," ou "*Les quarante-sept fidèles*," film parlant de Teinosuke Kinugasa.

"*Chûshin-gura*," oder "*Die 47 Getreuen*," ein Sprechfilm unter der Regie von Teinosuke Kinugasa.

bearing a grudge against *Kira*, gave the latter at the General's Palace a cut which proved to be not very serious. *Asano*, however, was ordered to commit *Hara-kiri* by the General's law. After two years of difficulties, the forty seven faithful of *Asano's* men revenged themselves upon *Kira* one snow falling night. Such is the story in a nutshell. Teinosuke Kinugasa films the sage only as it is traditionally known, never penetrating into the nucleus of the story from the new standpoint. (Just like Abel Gance in his *Napoleon*). If we put out of the question our dissatisfaction in that respect, Kinugasa is said to have done a comparatively good job. His success in *Chûshingura* is due to the scenario construction, so well built that there is not a dull moment, during three and a half hours' run. I heard that Kinugasa, when he was making it, was much exercised by many questions, such as synchronisation, anti-synchronisation, relations of sound with image, changing cuts by the antecedence of sound, utilization of silence, application of Kabuki-methods, etc. Though in this picture we can see two or three scenes in which dialogues are taken contrapuntally, they seem to me to be mere technics unreasonably applied, not rising necessarily from previous scenes. The most important and significant experiment is in a sequence at the beginning of the second part of this picture, in which events are developed in the milieu of a Japanese theatre of the corresponding time, As *Asano's Hara-kiri* event was a sensation at the time, it was presented as a play (though somewhat modified) at a Kabuki theatre. One day some of *Asano's* men happened to see the play. On the stage scene *Enya* who is identified with *Asano* is insulted, without any real reason by *Kono* in the part of *Kira*. All the spectators feel merciful toward *Enya*. Needless to say, *Asano's* men among the spectators are irritated with a sense of reality. At last one of them rushes to the theatre stage to kill the actor in the rôle of *Kono*, with the result that the play is completely spoiled by the unexpected intruder. In filming this sequence Kinugasa represented the so-called *Kabuki* methods in a well built cinema construction. As far as this sequence is concerned I cannot too much praise him.

Y. OGINO.

(End December, 1932. Japan.)



"Chûshin-gura," a talking film directed by Teinosuke Kinugasa. The men in white are going to commit "hara-kiri." White clothes are worn for the act of "hara-kiri."

"Chûshin-gura," film parlant réalisé par Teinosuke Kinugasa. Les hommes en blanc sont prêts à se donner le "hara-kiri." Les vêtements blancs sont d'usage pour ce mode de suicide.

"Chûshin-gura," ein Sprechfilm unter der Regie von Teinosuke Kinugasa. Die weissgekleideten Männer sind im Begriffe "Harakiri" zu verüben. Beim Harakiri wird stets weisse Kleidung getragen.

REALITY ISN'T TRUE

BY OSWELL BLAKESTON AND ROGER BURFORD.

Note.—This is the second of a series of articles designed to show the independent worker in cinema paths for advancing. The individual worker is only of importance if he tackles problems which are not touched by the professional slick movie. The first article, which appeared in *Close Up* for December, 1932, treated of fantastic happenings in small studio sets: this article suggests a treatment of simple scenes taken out-of-doors.

Private cinema workers must often have been guilty of filming a record of their holidays. They are the first to realise that there is little value in such strings of realistic event-photos. Yet, this article is to present how even that difficult theme of holiday-story could be treated for worthwhile effect. This is because the photography of reality is not considered so much as the photography of THOUGHTS about reality.

Every sensitive person knows that there are two lives: the life of sensation and the life of **FEELING ABOUT SENSATION**. Obviously it is of little value to march a camera around streets and hills and photograph this view and this view, but to photograph feeling about this sight and this sight—that is a different matter, that requires controlled thought, pre-vision. Cinematically the magic life is created by overtones, overtone montage . . . Photo of a star-fish. ("Go and catch a falling star.") Camera moving up to hold face of woman gazing out to sea, grey hair floating in the wind. ("Tell me where all past years are.") Etcetera.

The following scenario is constructed to convey an easy comprehension of overtone montage. How drama is kept imminent through a feeling for the thing about to happen: hints, visual pounces. Nothing happens in one world, everything in the magic world: fertility or rain-making motif of the girl's bathe? Compositions, colours, textures. Without actors, lights or sets. And the material is pretty elastic as the independent worker never knows quite what he is going to get; wet and dry, heat and coolness. A dozen similar themes would fit various localities, from the back garden to the Blue Danube. Musical background

Mr. Curtis pours, choking, a bucketful of Red Triangle cement out of the brown paper sack into the zinc bucket. A pollen of cement settles on the parched toe-caps of the shoes he keeps for his crazy-paving-making.

Tomlinson, the gardener in the next garden on the cliff-top, scratches at the dry clay on the knee of his cord trousers. Four snail shells, empty, on the path: very brittle, and casting no shadow. Tomlinson's horn nail ruffles up the cord pile and from the velvet stubble springs out a dry stream: motes circulating in the dusty sun which strikes through a crack in the wooden shed where he is sitting, among the raffia and the flower pots, the bunches of last-year's flowers with their heads tied up in brown paper bags. Dog-biscuit bag of white calico, with the heels of a bunch of tindery marigolds tied with printed yellow parcel tape.

Ada is waiting for Blanche in the tiled hall of Calais View. The concrete blocks of the marine parade (constructed in 1909) measure three feet by two by two; they are fixed with iron clamps. Blanche lurks in the shaded bedroom: a bar of shadow, a blind slat, traces across her face the contour of drooping lip and lowered eyelid: the two middle fingers of her right hand touch her throbbing temples: then she unfastens the strap of her wrist watch, lays the watch between the water carafe and the soap dish. A striped bathing box, with flaking paint, also a small crab shell on the sands, empty. Ada is wearing, and she knows it, sand shoes, but no stockings, a print frock, speckled, underneath that knickers and an artificial silk vest. Shifting the hang of the print dress so that it does not drag against her body she opens the door of Calais View. Sun lunges in at her, smites her, bends her back.



Mr. A. V. Pilichowski explains his sketch of a cinema of the future: "What seems required for a cinema to be truly cinematic is a more immediate contact between the screen and the audience. My suggestion is for a *panoramic screen*; the idea being that the screen should encircle the audience and thus make it part of a complete system. Mobile multiple projectors would throw pictures on the screen, the action being started at one end and terminated at the other. Visibility would not be required to be perfect from every seat at the same time, a certain element of interest being aroused by hiding, revealing, and hiding again the picture as it sweeps around the screen. The peculiar charm of the Elizabethan theatre or the intimate and spontaneous reactions experienced at the circus would be recaptured."

A gatepost of Calais View, made of pebbled biscuit-coloured cement studded with white chicken-grit; on top, seventy-eight oyster shells. Tomlinson walks down towards the kitchen garden with a trug of cabbage plants. Mr. Curtis tips out the Red Triangle cement on to the mixing board near the crazy paving that he is making. Ada and Blanche walk one behind the other along the cobbled path to the shell-studded gatepost, then side by side down the hill. The drugged cat on the flint wall does not move.

Tomlinson dibbles holes in the inhospitable soil, scrabbling away the stones with his horn nails, and Mr. Curtis runs his fingers through the sand: nice and sharp. And he begins to mix, one part cement, three parts sand, shovelling them together into a volcano, down the sides of

which continually from the other side pour the cement and sand, mingling in grey and ochre streaks, but, as they mix, then grey all over.

Blanche is wearing a white piqué frock with suntone stockings, and a big white hat: a yacht sail or a seagull cutting into the black sky . . . A spread fan of white Japanese rice paper on the marble mantelpiece of Calais View, tied with pastel blue silk cord. . . The two girls pad on in their silent sand shoes down the zig-zag towards the bay, first towards the lighthouse, then away from the lighthouse and towards the Marine Hotel, then away from the Marine Hotel and towards the lighthouse.* Mr. Curtis goes round and round his heap of cement, mixing it all up. Tomlinson moves down the row of dibbles with the cabbage plants. Wall's Ice Cream boy, in striped cotton jacket, blue serge trousers, pushing carrier tricycle up hill. Two women in shantung dresses turn back the leaves of the revolving post-card stand on the kiosk. Blanche and Ada step down on to the parade: Blanche's fingers with brittle nails feel for the iron rail of the steps going down to the beach. Blanche goes down. Ada goes down.

Four sand-shoed feet plod over the shingle where the seaweed lies wilting, or quite dry and ready to pop: the dry stones crashing together might drown Ada's small words. She runs her fingers round the yoke of her print dress. A cork dislodged by a sandshoe rolls down from the shingle ridge. It rolls and comes to rest against a sponge, a yellow brittle ball, dessicated. The cork lodges against it, *full stop*. *Semi-colon*, the wave curls up, flashes its teeth at the sun, sinks snarling into the sand, hissing, and draws back and sees what it has done, a narrow bite-line of tiny shells and fragments of pink and green weed on the wet flat sand. Then it bites again, sneezing and flashing.

Ada's fingers tremble as she reaches to undo the button of her print frock. Blanche's sand shoes, with the laces still knotted, lie limp, smelling slightly of warm rubber, against the boulder of chalk which traps in the undressing place all the white sun. Two bathing dresses lie on the chalk, spread out. The limp cabbage plants lie some this way some that, the whites of their eyes showing, or like the fish on the hot seats of the pier. Mr. Curtis begins to peel off his jumper: the woollen arm of heather mixture dangles down, jerking, as he struggles inside the baking wool. Blanche's fingers lift the edge of her skirt, feel for the suspender button: she peels off the suntone stocking. Her toes on the warm chalk. Snail shell on path, empty: translucent with faint blue markings. Tomlinson goes slowly up the path to the outside tap. Mr. Curtis fixes the water hose junction, as Ada has her bathing dress up to her waist, as Blanche has her bathing dress up to her waist, as Ada's left shoulder is in, as Blanche's left shoulder is in.

Four feet patter the flat sand, first dry and yellow, and then wetter and darker and flatter. The chalk and the cork and the zig-zag and the parade and the Marine Hotel and the cat on the flint wall and the gardens

* See "Published Scenarios," Page 50.

on the cliff and the tricycle and the shell studded gatepost are behind them, beating out the sun towards them, and in front of them the wave lifts its head and hisses and poises and then crashes down on their toes. OH! They run through the wave, splashing it up and churning it up. Water gushes out of the tap into the gardener's can and down the hose towards the smouldering volcano, tumbling down and sweeping away the expanding crater, streaming out and breaking down the powdery barriers, formed and reformed by the quick shovel, till the mass puddles down and slops over the board, while a small rain cloud begins to creep up in the west. Large black slug scummed over saliva in the wet cave behind a marrow lead.

Blanche stoops down; the wave heaves up over her shoulder, green and glassy. She falls flat and the wave covers her, and she jumps up gasping. Ada gasps "OH! oh!" as she wades in: pearls of sweat run down her dark brown shoulders, and a splash of sea tingles in her dark hair. Blood, running away from the clasp of the water, makes Ada feel up over her back and round her breasts and shoulder blades and neck and cheek, and the water spills out of the can round the cabbage plants. Not looking back, all you can see is two heads bobbing on the sea, which stretches for twenty miles, and in the other direction never ends till it has gone round Finisterre and Cape Horn, and has smashed against the reefs of Japan.

The wrist watch between the water caraffe and the soap dish has measured half an hour. Blanche's hands pick up the wet, warm, salty bathing dress and twist it slowly. A few drops of salty water fall on the chalk, and die out quickly. Tomlinson straightens and looks up at the rain cloud coming from the west. Mr. Curtis has laid another of his crazy-paving stones, and he draws a sack over it to keep it moist till it hardens out and grows hard and pale and grey among the mosses.

CINEMA PSYCHOLOGY

It was some thirty years ago that George Melies captivated the world with his feats of screen magic. By means of stop-camera, dissolves, double exposure and other originalities he outmatched the most astonishing performances of Aladdin's genie or the enchantments of Circe. Designed at the time simply as an end in themselves for the amusement of the wondering public, these clever camera illusions opened the door to the dramatic possibilities of the then recently invented motion picture. Herein was the incipience of a new art of imaginal expression. Whatever

might be the developments of the cinema, its paramount destiny lay in the realm of fantasy and idealism.

Such, at any rate, was the vision of the seers of that day. That the promise of their vision has not been realized is no discredit to them. Every justification was theirs. The promise was patently implicit in the early cinema, and, moreover, its warranty remains as an inherence in the cinema of to-day, albeit now heavily overlaid with prosaic dramatism. Certainly no craft or art yet invented has ever approached the motion picture in its unique ability to visualize the illusory or transcendental. Itself a creature of illusion—the mental deceit of motion—it is potentially the most resourceful and effective creator of illusion ever placed at the service of romanticism.

How, then, does it happen that with the growth of the cinema its exceptional usefulness in the field of imagery has been progressively ignored? Why has not the world's abundant and ever appealing literature in this extensive domain been translated into film—its fairy tales, its myths, its legends, its fables, its folklore, its poetic idealities, together with its never ending output of whimsy and fantasy?

The answer lies not in the unimaginativeness of the producers, but in the cinema itself. Cronus-like, it has devoured its own offspring. The possibilities born of its first efforts have been swallowed up in its evolving sophistication. As a creator of illusion it has produced so artful a deception of reality that it to-day presents the paradox of having destroyed the very virtue by which this accomplishment has been achieved. At all events, the public no longer accepts it in its illusional capacity. It has become transformed from an actuator into a mirror of the animated substantialities of life; and the more closely it approximates a true reflection, in story, in personalities and in naturalness of effects, the stronger becomes its popular attraction, with a corresponding further submergence of its primal character.

In the beginning and for a number of years it was nothing other than frankly true to its origin. Its initial attempts at coherent picture stories were characteristically illusive, fantastic, magical. With the improvement of dramatic technique and the introduction of professional actors, its original presentments gave way to others of less fanciful conception. Verisimilitude took the place of phantasy. Yet even here for a time illusion lingered as a passable incident, in the form of picturized thoughts, memories and retrospective scenes, with now and then a touch of the spectral, only to be eventually discarded in obedience to the growing exactions of realism.

Nevertheless, unaware of the psychological factor that has motivated the evolution of the cinema, producers have time and again during recent years undertaken the filming of *Arabian Nights* stories and other like imaginative creations of perennial popularity. To the producer, as well as the man on the street, the motion picture has appeared to be an ideal

medium for the presentation of stories of this type. And particularly has this seemed true in the light of the great advancement in cinematic craftsmanship and the means thus made possible for the facile producing of magical and spectacular effects.

All in all, therefore, according to this superficial view, films of *The Thief of Bagdad*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Peter Pan*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice in Wonderland* and others of similar character ought to have proved exceptionally attractive, as well as profitable. However, the exact opposite has resulted in every instance. All such pictures, and especially those exploiting well known players, have been signally unsuccessful. The public doesn't like them; won't have them.

Clearly, the modern motion picture has become distinctively and irrevocably associated with realism. Its any incursion into the realm of the ethereal is a psychological contretemps. In the beginning its exhibitions of illusion were acceptable because of the obvious make-believe of the mise en scène and the impersonality of the actors and because of the pictures' general technical crudeness. Every element contributed to the scene of unreality. But with the passing of the primitive mechanics of the cinema and the advent of substantial and recognizable realities, the essential psychological harmony was destroyed. Verity and phantom would not mix.

That the refusal of the public to accept present-day marvel pictures is in no wise attributable to any diminution of humanity's love of the fanciful and the fabulous, is emphatically attested by the unrivaled popularity of *Mickey Mouse* and *Silly Symphonies*. Whether knowingly or not, their creator, Walt Disney, has endowed these films in their every component with the basic essence of illusion—unreality of personification, of milieu, of action, and, in particular, the means of representation. There is here, in these animated drawings, no suggestion of photography—and it is photography, so inescapably evident in the cinema proper, that lies at the bottom of our conceptual association of motion pictures with veracious life and actuality.

In *Silly Symphonies* (for which, by the way, a more reputable and worthy name is now being sought) there shines the promise of a renaissance of imaginative films. Embellished with color and sound and devoted lately to the picturing of fable and fairy tale, they are possibly leading the way to a delectable fulfilment of the vision of the early cinema prophets. At any rate, the only hope of such a consummation lies in films of this character. The cinema of Hollywood stars will never be aught but of the earth earthy.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

BEGINNING OF THE YEAR IN GERMANY

Berlin, January, 1933.

The Berlin daily paper *Der Deutsche* is not very likely to have a large circulation. It is certainly neither too popular nor very important in any respect. It has a limited, but steady number of readers, and maintains the temperate attitude of an official gazette. In this quality of an official organ it serves the christian trade-union. Its editor is perhaps the busiest newspaper scientist of Germany: Professor Dr. Emil Dovifat, the director of the Berlin University Institute of Journalism.

For some years (since 1924) this paper—having previously held little influence—has been of interest to the film observer. Every New Year's issue contains the question: "Which film impressed you most last year?" This question is put to a comparatively great number of people in Germany and abroad—to people working on the film, to authors, artists, journalists, instructors, to organisations and firms of every kind and tendency. This time nearly 300 answers have been sent in, among which is Mussolini's as well as the answer of Oskar Tietz, the German competitor in the 6 days' race. The total circulation of all the papers whose film critics have stated their opinion is more than 27½ millions.

Most frequently the film *Der träumende Mund* (*The Dreaming Mouth*) was mentioned—the work of Paul Czinner, with Elizabeth Bergner playing the leading rôle. Second came *Les Croix des Boix* by the French director, Raymond Bernard.

One need not overestimate this voting, for its importance is lessened by the fact that the various participants in all parts of the world cannot have seen the same films within the same space of time. But yet it remains remarkable and convincing, that every year films which doubtlessly mean an achievement, are victorious: Two years ago it was *Sous les toits de Paris*, last year it was *Mädchen in Uniform*, and now it is *Der träumende Mund*. It is evident that this is not merely by chance. Once only, but by one of the cleverest German critics the film *Unmögliche Liebe* (*Impossible Love*), and the name of Asta Nielsen were mentioned.

I don't know really whether this means anything to England and the Anglo-Saxon countries, or not. Even in Germany her name has been almost forgotten, although about 25 years ago only, it was Asta Nielsen from Denmark who—by her ardent endeavours after serious film dramatism—began the struggle for artistic films, a struggle which is still going on. What she did was done for Germany, for Europe, for the world. And the laurel wreath she was given by the "Dachorganisation der Filmschaffenden Deutschlands EV," rightly bore the dedication: "To the first genius of

film art." For Chaplin came much later, and Garbo is still young. And the renown of directors never finds so distinct an expression.

But seven or eight years ago things began to grow rather quiet where Asta Nielsen was concerned, and after the sound film had come into existence, perfectly quiet. For she had reached the age of 50, and it seemed difficult for a woman of that age to find an important rôle in which she would please the public. Besides that her German undoubtedly had a Danish accent. Therefore it took years for her to get her rôle at last.

Here she plays a Baltic emigrant who has always worked hard to bring up her two daughters, thereby neglecting her own life and ambitions. And now after years of self-sacrifice, she begins to think of her right to live and to love—and is wrecked—by conventions, by her surroundings, and by her daughters. A woman with marriageable daughters has to resign.

The film is weak for it was made from a psychological novel probably with many details, and now it dabbles along—meditating and epic—with no dramatic tension, like an unfalling stream. And finally it denies itself the effect principally intended: for the film portrait of a woman of 50—rough, frontal and superficial—contradicts in itself her right of love, even if this woman is rejuvenated by the art of Asta Nielsen.

Characteristic to this art are: sureness, composedness, economy. There is no other actress—with the exception of Garbo—who would dare to give herself so much time before the camera, and who would rely on so little mimic art—and yet reveal so much of her soul. Asta Nielsen, sleek-headed, with bobbed hair, a pale, flat face, straight line of the mouth, her too dark eyes—this physiognomy recalling 1918, with its money inflation and vices—this unfashionable figure—is a classical representative of the film, of the close up, of motion always fitting to the available space.

Elizabeth Bergner in *Der träumende Mund*, is exactly her counterpart. She, a virtuoso of the stage, who has been educated to awareness of the distance between stage and stalls, is constantly keyed to this distance—which must be bridged by steady intensity, by accumulation of detail and nuance. Her ever-expressive and nervous acting, with its "emphasizing" technique and timing, never yields itself to the means of the camera, does not calculate its enlargements and exaggerations—and will therefore seem unnatural, affected and hysterical to those who think the virtuoso unentitled to outweigh composition with technique.

Once more we must speak of this *der Deutsche* concensus. And first of all must be mentioned that some observant reviewers of German film work were courageous enough to vote for a short one-reel film, for *Die steinernen Wunder von Naumburg* (The Stone Marvels of Naumburg) by Kurt Oertel the camera man.

The cathedral of Naumburg is one of the most beautiful romanish buildings on earth, and this one-reel film is one of the most beautiful experiments in the filming of buildings. Here only the camera moves, the scene itself is motionless. The stone sculptures, pillars, columns and

arches of the cathedral stand immovable and—seen in different lighting and from different angles—they reveal to the observer such dramatic motion as otherwise is revealed only to the learned and very attentive observer.

Apropos architecture: Two Germans who work on films have announced that they want to transpose phonetically with the photo cell the light reactions of plastics, and to compose them with their parallel visual impressions to obtain sound film accords.

This extremity must have been suggested by the experiments of Oscar Fischinger whose compositions of dancing lines are the only kind of abstract film which can be found in the regular programme of the German cinemas, and which are well received by the public. Fischinger, who originally by synchronisation of his studies made real record pieces, has been trying recently—in order to obtain a more complete unity of picture and sound—to record decorative music in the Lichtongerät (light-sound) apparatus.

Simpler, more thorough and practical seem to be the similar endeavours of Rudolf Pfenniger, who after a long and difficult analysis, was successful in the calculation of sound writings, and also in drawing them with the hand. His "*Sounds from Nowhere*" sound rather strange and hollow for the present, like stopped up wooden instruments, but were composed for several voices, and seem to be quite a suitable acoustical background for marionette and trick films.

Thinking of these somewhat impetuous experiments, and that these last months have confirmed the talent of two or three very young directors—finally, that the German musical film comedy has become more ingenious, even genuine and really amusing—then one would be almost inclined to forget that one German film company after the other is breaking down, and that the total sum of passive debts for the last years seems to be more than 20,000,000 Rm. One would be almost inclined to forget that the position of Ufa within the range of German film work means an incontestable, financial, organic, technical, artistic and philosophic monopolisation of the German film. And to-day this danger is greater and more urgent than ever. One neglects it because of the promising experiments of outsiders—exactly as one slights the darkness of the situation in Europe, as soon as somewhere a light—no matter how faint—happens to penetrate the darkness, and an optimist seeing it thinks: Day-break!

A. KRASZNA-KRAUSZ.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

FACTS ONLY.

"The success of *Madchen in Uniform* is having strange consequence, it is making it harder and harder for me to run a repertory theatre for continental talkies in London. Film producers abroad say, 'If *Madchen in Uniform* could make such a hit in London, my picture will make your fortune!' And they insist, week by week, on higher guarantees."

It was strange hearing how the success of one film nearly ruined the theatre which promoted it. But Miss Elsie Cohen was kind enough to list for me her daily increasing difficulties, in order that *Close Up* could urge its readers to co-operate more strongly with Miss Cohen's splendid effort.

Film lover must go more often and take more friends to *The Academy* and *Cinema House* and here are the reasons why:

"Some patrons are a little discontented that they cannot see a certain foreign picture which strikes them as being of special importance. BUT, if I import even a short from abroad, I have to begin by paying a royalty to the sound system (generally Tobis Clang).

"This royalty is a minimum £25 for a one reel picture.

"The owners of the film have to be paid their fee, and a new copy has to be paid for; while transport expenses have to be covered by us.

"Then—and how many patrons realise this?—there is the duty of one penny a foot and the censor's fee of two pounds a reel.

"With a full length picture, there is the additional expense of superimposed titles. This is generally about £150: with the present feature at *The Academy*, the laboratory bill and the editing expenses amounted to £200.

"Before a new feature picture is shown on the screen, I estimate that it will cost me £400.

"And you know how large *The Academy* is? We seat 600 and take about fifty pounds for a full house. We have four shows a day, *but a cinema is considered to be doing very well if it takes a house and a half a day.*

"There is, you know, a thing called the Entertainment Tax and there are the running expenses of a theatre. You'd be surprised, I believe, if I told you how much our mailing list costs per week.

"Still, I think I have told you enough to let you explain why we cannot get all the films which cinéastes would like to see. Also, I hope that these figures will convince cinema patrons that they ought to attend each change of programme even if, now and then, there is a feature which may not be so interesting as its predecessor."

O. B.

THE LAST OF THE SILENTS.

So the last of Inner-London's silent cinemas has gone. The construction of a News Reel theatre on the site of the little Gaiety Cinema in Tottenham Court Road shatters what, for hundreds of London movie fans was a sentimental link with the past.

Many of us had a strange affection for this little cinema. Situated in the West End, flanked on all sides by far more expensive rivals announcing "hundred-per-cent." talkies, it steadfastly ignored the march of progress, and although the months ran into years none but silent films flickered across its battered but honoured screen.

It is doubtful if the Gaiety changed much from the day it was built to the day of its death. The creaky piano, usually the sole accompaniment to the pictures, the back row of seats covered with dainty if dusty bits of lace, the film breaks at crucial moments, the sensational challenging posters out front—all this took us back to a period long before the talkies arrived.

And the films! The Gaiety was a joy for the connoisseur, for without warning you would notice one day that some almost forgotten epic of the great German era was shewing. And black-hatted intellectuals would rub shoulders with the denizens of Tottenham Court Road's back streets, admiring the genius of Pabst and the artistry of Brigitte Helm.

And then perhaps an unknown French or Italian production would send us scampering along in keen anticipation. Russian films were shewn too—*The End of St. Petersburg* ran for a fortnight. American railroad dramas with middle-West settings, thrilling exploits of Harry Peel, the German stunt king, revivals of incredibly ancient Chaplins—you never knew what you would get next at the Gaiety.

And now it has gone and a big slice of the past has gone with it.

R. BOND.

SPECTATORS' GROUPS IN AMERICA.

The film club, begun in France after the war by men like that lamented missionary of the film-as-art, Canudo, has at last reached the shores of the United States. North America had already inaugurated a film-exhibition body in Mexico City; the commercial offspring of the film club, "the little cinema," had been Americanized and demoralized; individuals had projected their careers in corporate guilds and the like; but the non-ulterior film club had really never been adopted in these Yankee provinces. And then—almost simultaneously—two appear, the Film Society and the Film Forum, the latter the larger body in anticipated membership. There is no competition between these two groups, indeed several individuals are associated with both, either officially or unofficially,

for instance, your New York correspondent. The feature of the opening program of the Society on January 29th was the French version of Pabst's *Threepenny Opera*, a very fortunate introduction, since the German version received an inauspicious release here (though I chose it as my major sound film to conclude my lecture-course at the New School) by Warner Brothers, and the brothel scene was deleted by the censors. There is now no intact copy of the German version here; the uncensored French version has its first exhibition at the Film Society.* Other items in the programme were Disney's first colour animation, *King Neptune*, and Oscar Fischinger's light animation of Brahms Hungarian Dance. (The American distributor announces it as Brahms' Ninth Symphony.) The Film Forum will probably have the distinction of the first American showing of Dovzhenko's *Ivan*. Englishmen will be interested to know that Miss Iris Barry, one of the founders of the London Film Society, is an executive member of the New York society. That organization intends to devote surplus funds to the furtherance of workers' newsreels, a growing activity in the United States.

A third organization is the Film Guild of America, initiated by F. M. Delano, which sponsors programs in conjunction with schools. This joint exhibition with the Junior High School of Mamaroneck, N.Y., is typical: Douglas Burden's *The Silent Enemy*, a *Mickey Mouse* (*Mad Dog*), *Plant Growth*, *To-day and Yesterday*, a newsreel compilation. There is an evening performance and a junior matinee. And still a fourth unit is the International Cinema League, a distributors' tieup which purports to relate foreign films to courses in languages in the schools. Its aim, the intention of Mr. Edward Ginsburg, is to get the support of educational boards in the various municipalities.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

TACHYSCOPE, DAEDALEUM AND FANTOSCOPE.

From the middle of November till the middle of December, the Royal Photographic Society had an excellent exhibition of Kinematography, somewhat bleakly arranged, but seething with interest. There were examples of the earliest known instruments by which man has attempted to portray movement in action . . . an "Anamorphoscope" of 1635, an "Anorthoscope," "invented by Plateau of Ghent with the aid of his devoted wife after he had lost his sight through exposing them to the bombardment of the sun's rays in 1833." Mutely inside case after case were these early evidences of attempts to satisfy that strange longing for expression in movement and light. A set of Kineograph Books (1868), the first book-forms of pictures to show movement; a Kinora Picture Viewing

* A print which contains, however, the French censor's deletion "Les riches ont le coeur dur mais les nerfs sensibles."

Machine, with a reel showing Lottie Collins dancing "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay"; Lumière's combined projector, printer and camera; and among many instruments and machines which seemed no more than toys, with their rolls of painted figures, their mirrors, and lantern slides, such a thing as "Life in the Lantern," described in the catalogue as "a later development of the Bio-Phantoscope," which is "historically of the utmost importance," for Friese-Greene, the inventor of practical commercial cinematography, used it at his Piccadilly shop, causing such crowds that the police ordered its removal. This is "a vertical copper lamp-house, having fixed about its outer surface a gallery carrying seven photographic lantern slides, showing Rudge apparently taking his head off his body and placing it under his arm." This was the first example of trick photography in the world. Round these relics, the latest cameras, projectors, and lenses. There was a strip of the first film in the world made of an endless celluloid band; many other strips of early film, too, including a two-colour positive of 1898. These would have gained had they been better exhibited. There was also a piece of paper film, soaked in castor oil to make it transparent—period 1885, but complete with perforated margins and toothed sprockets. One could peer through glass cases at the first film review of the first display of moving pictures; at old playbills, and programmes of early demonstrations, photos of Friese-Greene's first studio, prints these were from the Gardener Collection. The others, naturally, from Will Day's.

Upstairs a display of stills from the world's familiar best films. Most interest attached to the Japanese.

It was worth while to see how many men had to work, in how many ways, before the cinema that we know was evolved. It was interesting to speculate why this and not that method proved fruitful, and to wonder what would have happened had men of vision equal to the inventors' been at hand to use the three marvels that ultimately supplanted Chorentoscope and Heliocinographe—projector, camera, and screen. R. H.

PUBLICITY AGAIN.

"And still the pensive spring returns
And still the punctual snow."

Yes, these are genuine extracts from publicity sheets issued by the leading companies! Men are paid to sit in offices and compose this dope for film critics!

NUMBER ONE. "Mr. X wants atmosphere. So, working on Y, African story of sleeping sickness, he appeared in the following: One cork helmet, one tunic, one pair of shorts, one pair high leather boots. If it had been anyone but a director—well?" We suggest if it had been a publicity agent

NUMBER TWO. "Long weeks spent in Greenland making Y, as a screen epic for X, risking death from cold, from drowning in the icy water, from being crushed by falls of ice . . . and back to civilization with a four-inch beard and a health record you would envy . . . That's Gibson Gowland. Three days in England in the comparative luxury and guaranteed comforts of civilized London and—ah-tish-oo! That's Gibson Gowland ! ! !"

NUMBER THREE. "Z, feminine interest in X's latest horror screen play, claims she can live as happily on twenty-five dollars a week as she can on twenty-five hundred."

NUMBER FOUR. Off-set, we are told, the stars wear eccentric clothes—"floppy, sometimes sloppy pants!" "Mr. X is seldom without an admittedly garish 'Lido Shirt' of eccentric red-and-white stripes, and if there is an undershirt beneath it, or if there isn't, what of it?"

NUMBER FIVE. "Clyde Beatty, King of animal trainers, says wildest beasts respect man's superior brain. And will show it in X's latest Screen Sensation."

O. B.

Film-Studio Zurich. (Schipfe 57, Zurich).

A new association has just been founded at Zurich, with the name of Film-Studio Zurich, and its aim is to present independent, artistic and avant-garde films. The annual subscription is five Swiss francs which gives the right to a reduction of fifty centimes on the ordinary prices of tickets at representations arranged by the society.

The same group have also created *Le Groupement Cinematographique Franco-Suisse*, in order to encourage the projection at Zurich of the most characteristic of the new French films. This will fill a gap, for at present French films are shown at Zurich only at somewhat rare intervals. For this the subscription is three Swiss francs which gives a reduction of twenty per cent. on the usual ticket prices.

The activity of these two new organisations must be of great help to the students of cinema at Zurich, and we hope that their efforts will be rewarded with success.

Genossenschaft Filmdienst. (21, Erlacherstrasse, Berne).

At last we have a Swiss firm of film production, and one which has begun its career, full of excellent resolutions. Where publicity has usually been confined to the incomparable pictorial qualities of Switzerland, this firm stresses the need for realism and something of the native poetry as well. *Les Grenadiers du Bon Dieu*, the first film the Gefi have made, was filmed in the Loetschental, with the help of only one professional actor, and with the people of the neighbourhood. We hope to comment further on this film when it has been shown.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

THE LAKE OF THE WILD SWANS.

"No, we did not hear the swans singing, and there was nothing romantic about it, neither perfume of flowers nor rays of sun dancing over the water, but plenty of swamp, mud and dirt; and even the landscape cannot boast of any particular charms."

"But I know you have been in Sweden on Lake Tokern, the dwelling place of the wild swans, the aristocrats among the birds, and I wish you would tell me something about it."

This conversation took place in one of the cutting rooms of the Neubabelsberg Ufa studios. There I got hold of him, Dr. Ulrich K. T. Schulz, head of the Ufa Scandinavian expedition. I wanted to hear something about singing swans, their shining waves of white feathers, about flowers swinging over the water, I wanted to be told the romantic legends of mysterious Lake Tokern.

"If you fancy a tale of romance and a swan's song, then you are bound to be disappointed. But if you want to know what Lake Tokern really looks like, I shall be pleased to tell you."

"There are many small villages around the borders of this lake, which is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and 2 miles wide. It is extremely shallow, for its greatest depth measures hardly one foot. The ground consists of mud, which has a depth of many yards. The surface of the lake is covered with water-plants of all kinds. It's a regular paradise for the swans, as in the mud they can easily find plenty of food. They are very shy, these birds, and can only be approached with the utmost difficulty. By means of shallow boats we constructed a pontoon, which we covered with reed and rush-grass. Flatly stretched out, the camera carefully hidden under reeds, we crept on the swans. So we succeeded in photographing them at closest range. We watched breeding birds and proud parents with three or four, sometimes even six or seven young ones, and we caught most wonderful and interesting scenes with our camera. We also flew across the lake in an airplane and secured good specimen shots from above."

"'Enchanted Lake' it is called by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages. It was tried several times to drain the lake, because they expected to get fertile soil for agricultural purposes. But money and efforts have been in vain. Gasses always bubbled up from the ground, and soon again mud and swamp were covered by the ground-water. Is there anything else you want to know?"

"I confess that I am very much disillusioned. In my imagination everything had been so entirely different. But let me ask you another question: Do the swans stay in the North during the winter?"

"Oh no, as soon as the first frost shows, the birds start in large flocks to the South, as far as Africa. The farmers in the villages told us it is the most overpowering sight to see the birds rushing off in majestic flight with their great wings spread out wide."

"I am sorry that I had to shatter your illusions about the romance and mystery of the 'Enchanted Lake,' but I can assure you that you will not be disappointed when you see the pictures we have taken. For these we must be thankful to the swans, although they failed to give us a farewell song when we took our departure."

HETE NEBEL.

A CORRECTION.

We regret that by an oversight, Mr. Jean Lenauer stated that Mr. J. Prévert was the author of the scenario of "L'Affaire est dans le sac." Actually the scenario was written by Mr. A. Rathonyi, and Mr. Prévert was the adaptor and author of the French dialogue.

MEN AND JOBS.

Events from the Russian film front have been quiet since Ekk's *Road to Life*. A few Soviet talkies have been privately shewn in London, including *Death House* and *The Golden Mountains*, but they have not received public exhibition. It is to be hoped, therefore, that a better reception will be accorded to Macheret's production *Men and Jobs* which arrived in London early in February.

Men and Jobs is fully in accord with the present social purpose of the Soviet Cinema. The film opens with an American engineer crossing the border into the U.S.S.R. In his pocket is a contract to work on one of the new construction jobs.

At the plant to which the engineer is allocated a meeting is in progress to celebrate the success of the worker Zukharov whose "shock brigade" has led all others in production tempo.

The engineer, Cline, arrives at the plant, observes the backwardness of technique and accuses Zukharov of not knowing how to work. The two men almost came to blows. Cline cuts down the time for a certain job from nine to three minutes, and inspired with the slogan "Catch up with American Technique," Zukharov's brigade resolves to enter into competition with Cline's section.

The shock brigade is spurred to greater efforts by "forced labour" lies in the foreign press, and then follows a most thrilling sequence entirely carried through with graphs. The director has succeeded in making charts and graphs truly cinematic, and the audience emotion is intense as the line representing Zukharov's brigade at last merges with and finally jumps above the American's.

Another factory meeting is held. Zukharov, a great gawky, awkward fellow, modestly responds to the applause. Cline, the American, is then called to the rostrum.

After much polishing of spectacles he finally achieves the following speech: "Udarniki—Competition—Hip, Hip, Hooray!" Tremendous enthusiasm.

The film closes in the spirit of "American Technique plus Revolutionary Enthusiasm," symbolised in the handclasp of Zukharov and Cline.

Men and Jobs marks a big advance in Soviet sound recording, which seems to improve steadily. The story is interesting both for its content, and for the types, who are actual workers. Macheret has handled his material and characters with a nice sense of humour. Thus the workers and the foreign technician are made to appear "regular fellows" who, separated at first by language difficulties and different social environments achieve finally a complete understanding.

The copy shewn in London was received from America where Amkino had inserted English titles to explain the Russian dialogue.

R. BOND.

A TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT.

The Impassive Footman, an A.R.P. film, directed by Basil Dean, which does not achieve greatness, is noteworthy for a remarkably clever impression of going under an anæsthetic. The patient's talkativeness calls forth the comment "He's a talkative fellow"; and the sound consists of the phrase "A talkative fellow" repeated rhythmically with increasing speed and volume till a maximum followed by a *decrescendo*. Accompanying the sound is a picture of the heads of the surgeons as seen from below by the patient. The heads sweep into view and out again, sweep back, rotate rapidly and fade out. The combined effect of sound and picture in my own case was an unmistakable sensation of swooning: and my companion, who had the advantage of me of experiencing an anæsthetic, felt the same reaction. A second sitting through the sequence confirmed the first impression. It is, of course, impossible to convey the effect in words; but I may add that it was much more convincing than similar experiments in impressionism—for example, that seen on the stage (with the advantage of colour) in "The Adding Machine" when Zero "sees red." M. S.

AN AVANT-GARDE FILM SHOW IN VIENNA.

The chance of seeing Avant-Garde Films in Vienna is rare. I can remember only one occasion in connection with a photo-exhibition a few years ago. The more thankful should we be to those who arranged a show of Avant-Garde films in a Viennese "Volksbildungsheim"; how great is the interest and the need for good, artistic films, was shown by the fact

that the performance was crowded, although it was given in a rather remote district and no special advertisement was made. The performance was introduced by a speech by Mr. Fritz Rosenfeld, who pointed out the difference between the aims of the avant-garde artists and those of the film-industry. The films we saw have been well known to *Close Up* readers for some years: there was *Montparnasse*, the thrill and liveliness of which has not faded since it was done, and which everyone liked especially; and there was the *Sky-Scraper Symphony*: a way of photographing architecture—a revelation at the time the film was done—has been so often imitated since that the film seemed very familiar even to those who had never seen it; that sort of film where everything depends on the rhythm of cutting ought to have some synchronized music—or be shown in silence. The reception of *The Fall of the House of Usher* was mixed: one part of the audience was fascinated by the play of the actors to a great extent and another part (the greater one) was not able to follow the mystic atmosphere of the film, and its overstrained, uncanny plot.

TRUDE WEISS.

THE LIGHT WITHIN.

In *The Monthly Film Record* for September, 1918, there appears a review of a picture called *The Light Within*. A quotation of the review as written will surely delight all lovers of the primitive movie:—

“ So many ‘ medical ’ pictures have been shown that it is quite a feather in the producer’s cap for something original to be imported into this class of drama. Allowing for a little unconventionality in hospital methods, the play interests, and Olga Petrova shines as usual. She is Laurel Carlisle, M.D., married to a millionaire, Clinton, who is obviously as self-centered and opinionated a man as even the richest man might be. He hates her hospital work. She is a worker. Their natures clash at every point. She has a little boy, Donald; also, an undeclared lover, Doctor Leslie, who knows how to hold his tongue. Laurel has invented still another serum—to break meningitis, which, I believe, is wrongly described as an epidemic. Clinton goes yachting and is supposed to be drowned. Leslie declares himself and, just as all is well between the harmoniously inclined pair, Clinton returns. He knows what has transpired, but holds his tongue, being one of those who smile and smile, and, saying nothing, plans all the harder. Through the father’s carelessness, Donald dies. Clinton blames his wife, declaring that she had imported germs into the house. He insults the consultant when he says that the boy died of pneumonia. In the city the epidemic is raging. To test her serum, Leslie offers herself as subject. Wild with rage, Clinton invades her laboratory, and, cutting his hand, is infected with anthrax germs. Incidentally, he upsets the precious vial of serum. A chauffeur invades the

Zoo and steals the mascarene turtle from which the serum is to be made. Leslie is saved. Clinton dies horribly."

Certainly, we would have loved to have seen this movie with its "little unconventionality in hospital methods!"

THE CARTOON COLOUR-FILM.

We all know that colour is one of those things "just round the corner." We know, too, that it is being kept there by the producing firms who want to keep it, as they kept talkies, to spring on the world when it once again begins to tire of mass-made movies. These same firms declare that they are "refraining" from using colour till it's perfected. That, of course, is just so much hooley.

Several isolated German advertisement films show that. Disney's new *Silly Symphonies* show it even more. Two have been seen in London. The colour is excellent. Scenes are not limited to one or two colours in varying shades—orange-pink, orange and blood, or ink, watered ink, faded green—as we have hitherto had to endure. The new Technicolour gives clear full yellow, pale blue that is clean. Light browns as well as dark browns; rich ivy green besides emerald and olive. A flame no longer looks like a spilt tomato cocktail. The lightest of colours are possible, shell-pinks, the strange green of layers of water, lily-white.

Disney was wise, of course, in being the first to hop out with this improved Technicolour. The great accusation has always been that so much light, and light interplay, was submerged in colour. This danger is not incurred in cartoon films. The colour is flat, as the film is flat. There is one dimension. Also a cartoonist is able to select his colours, which is not possible when filming natural scenes. More noticeable is that colour underlines Disney's methods with music. If he was cute to use it in cartoon-films, he was even cuter to use it in his symphonies. They are immeasurably better than his Mickey Mouse. Mickey bores. The formula is mechanically repeated, without surprise or novelty. The excuses for musical entertainment, into which all Mickey Mouse films resolve, are few and feeble. A great deal has been said of the sound-screen's debt to Disney. Actually, he has ignored sound. He has concentrated on music. One grows sick of these ducks squeaking in harmony, the horses playing castanets with their teeth. I imagine the road to hell is paved with railway lines which turn out to be xylophones, lined with cows that ring bells by pulling each others' tails

But with the *Silly Symphonies*, it is different. Music belongs to them, as sound should have belonged to Mickey. And colour brings out the lyricism which the music attempts to infuse. Despite marvellous synchronisation, it is hard to regard drawing and music as always being

one in spirit. But in *Flowers and Trees*, when the forest awakens to soft music, the tenderness that is to be the atmosphere is captured visually by the soft tones of the unfolding flowers. When the old blasted oak disturbs an idyll between two other trees by starting a forest fire, the red flame is more dramatic than the black splodge that would have done for it in the plain black and white drawings. The black-eyed susans in this film have definitely increased star-value, through being in colour, and the fishes in the second symphony, *Neptune*, are more fantastic and less burlesque than they would have been plain. Colour undoubtedly is a help in the Disney world. His films now are one step nearer a child's picture book come to life. Humour and drawing remain childish — colour adds, and detracts nothing. As forerunners, they are interesting; as symphonies, *Flowers and Trees* and *Neptune* are the best he has done. One can see therefrom what others might do . . . as usual.

It is, incidentally, worth noticing that Disney's 31 films for the coming year will cost £160,000 to produce. Four years ago, 20 people were employed making them; now, there are over 200. The first Mickey Mouse cartoon was made in a garage; to-day, he is housed in "a half-million dollar plant in the heart of Hollywood."

R. H.

A FILM SCHOOL IN GENEVA.

The *cinema must be reformed*, is the praiseworthy basis on which is laid the ideology and curriculum of the new *Marie Lachenal Cinema School*, situated at No. 4, route de Malagnou, Geneva. This school is open to persons of all nationalities and all ages, and its year is divided into three terms—1st October to 31st December, 1st January to 31st March, and 1st April to 30th June. At the end of each scholastic year, public auditions of short films made by the school will be given.

The reform in question which begins by unifying into an *idée maîtresse* the work of all participants and the use of their function, proceeds to develop the *idea* at the expense of any personal element—in much the same way, it would appear, as the State Institute of Cinema at Moscow. A course can be taken in each of the following branches—Acting, Music, Scenario Writing, Stage Directing, Scenic Art. Courses for the training of Ensembles are established in order, to give to each one the opportunity to benefit by work accomplished in other branches.

Full particulars can be obtained from the Secretary at the above address.

Mr. A. V. Pilichowski explains his sketch of a cinema of the future: "What seems required for a cinema to be truly cinematic is a more immediate contact between the screen and the audience. My suggestion is for a

panoramic screen; the idea being that the screen should encircle the audience and thus make it part of a complete system. Mobile multiple projectors would throw pictures on the screen, the action being started at one end and terminated at the other. Visibility would not be required to be perfect from every seat at the same time, a certain element of interest being aroused by hiding, revealing, and hiding again the picture as it sweeps around the screen. The peculiar charm of the Elizabethan theatre or the intimate and spontaneous reactions experienced at the circus would be recaptured."

BOOK REVIEWS

In *Leisure in the Modern World*, by C. Delisle Burns (George Allen and Unwin. 8/6), it is good to hear the statement made that leisure is the most valuable product of modern mechanism, but that it is generally scorned and wasted.

As regards the levelling effects of "modern improvements," for he believes that all great individuality is based on a large store of common experience, and that common comfort makes for a greater tendency for experiments. "The more you know of other people the more you may dislike them: bridging the gap may be only increasing the tendency to fight on the bridge." It's not always a case of out of the frying pan into the fire: some sausages jump clean!

For the attention of cinéastes, there is a special chapter on leisure and the cinema.

O. B.

Paine and Lillian Gish.

Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine, biographer of Mark Twain, immortalizes Lillian Gish in a biography as sententious and vapid as its title, "Life and Lillian Gish" (Macmillan: \$3.50). The book has been sufficiently roasted by every literary and dramatic critic who touched it, but it was the book only they profaned, not the Gish who was, at the time of its appearance, undoing "Camille" on the New York stage. She, they declared, was not the camelia-lady, nor especially an actress of ability, but simply Gish and that was enough. Too much I'd say. Her "etherealness" is a legend built up by the Wagenknechts, Hergesheimers and Georgie Nathans. (Emile Gauvreau, Frankenstein of peephole journalism, in his book "The Scandalmonger" speaks of "George Gish Nathan.") I have just re-seen the waxen dame in the old Griffith pictures: *The Battle of the Sexes*, *Intolerance*, *Hearts of the World*, and whatever beauty there is in the Gish of her

girlhood was the work of G. W. "Billy" Bitzer, the cameraman, of whose value Miss Gish long ago expressed her appreciation. The Paine book may be characterized by the legend he quotes from Allene Talmey: "What are you looking at, Lillian?" Mrs. Gish has asked for years. "Nothing, Mother, just looking!"

H. A. P.

Writing for the Films, by L'Estrange Fawcett, Sir Isaac Pitt & Sons, Ltd.
3/6 net.

A useful little *vade mecum* which will make depressing and even sickening reading for those who hope to bring ideas to the film. Mr. Fawcett's information is, unfortunately, all true, and the impartiality of his telling in no way reduces the feeling of horror inspired by the morass of childish vulgarity in which commercial films are conceived, shaped, censored, and shown. His list of unequivocal and approved subjects for film writing—it must be read to be believed! Yet how true it is! What a world!

For those who are not fully aware of what they are likely to encounter in their uphill climb to success as a scenario writer, it will be kill or cure. *Is a Revolution in Method Coming?* forms the last chapter. It is deductive but not very hopeful. How could it be?

K. M.

BOOKS IN A BUNDLE.

"Do ring me up, I have a telephone now."

"Oh! yes? Any particular number?"

That condenses some of the futility of life, but little of the futility of life in film novels. Actual working in of details about studio work gives an excuse for working out of time-rubbed (hair-over-collar effect) plots. A pity! a little more effort and the genuine film-land would make a worthwhile book. There is the parable to shock—the tale of the lady in the caravan who had to go to the lavatory on a bicycle because there were no trees for miles around. Yet!

Film Lady, by James Wedgewood Drawbell (Collins. 7/6) deserves an ivy leaf to show it's a good effort, just as a poet draws an ivy leaf on her best sonnets to help editors. Lighter scenes are not shrill and the conversation is easy: intenser moments clatter to the bottom like a Spanish rack-and-thumbscrew railway. *Monica in the Talkies*, by Richard Starr (Sampson Low. 7/6) gives the vertical rather than the horizontal approach. The backgrounds have not the authentic quality of Mr. Drawbell's

It is amusing to see how characters from film books wander into the new novels. Especially author-favoured is the film star with two secretaries who, when progressing in a taxi, travels at third hand. Richard Oke, however, in *Wanton Boys* (Gollancz. 7/6) managed to introduce a

very human star-on-the-wane. *Fabian*, by Eric Kastner (Cape. 7/6) has a heroine who stars in quite a neat scenario. A man forces his wife to change her personality, night by night, to wear different clothes and become a different type of mistress-wife. At length the woman begins to change her personalities automatically; finally she turns into the hard, bitter tyrant the man most dreads

INTERVAL for refreshment from Mary Butt's *Death of Felicity Tavener* (Wishart. 7/6), the most ambient of recent novels. "Like others of our age, they had rediscovered also the still-life, that, however it may get itself painted, it is not 'nature morte,' but that each haphazard arrangement can be composed of formal perfections of shape and light—plates on a table, a basket of folded linen, a sea-scape off the beach in a glass dish. They knew that the twenty-four hours of the day and night are a cinema, an *actualité*, a continuous programme, whose hero is the sun and whose heroine is the moon, whose play is the modification of light, whose pathos is sunset, with sunrise for epiphany."

Elegy in Memory of D. H. Lawrence, by Walter Lowenfels (Carrefour, 16, Rue Denfert Rochereau, Paris. 15 shillings) is part of a much longer poem, *Reality Prime*. The author says, "I have had in mind a form of operatic poem: verse, music, moving design, synchronized on a recording instrument: reproduced, from records, privately by the 'reader.'" The verse, though, seems to us to be too mental in the sense of being written too closely to a prose programme. We might call it GEOMETRY-ON-VELVET. Again, we find the programme with its biology, flies breeding maggots out of sacrificial flesh, Orphic wheels, birth from historic womb, etcetera, too, the occult Mrs. Beeton. It would be happy to see it fall into shape were music and film added to the author's conception. These little things make a difference. It was in a British International Pictures' press sheet that we read the correction for the previous week's issue, when the word SNIPER should have read SINGER.

The Austrian year book of photography appeared on Charing Cross Road. A man of wit remarked to us, "It is like *Congress Dances* before it learnt how to!"

O. B.

A New Periodical has appeared in England, which demands effort and offers achievement. That in itself is a change and a recommendation. Not a review but a creative quarterly, the first issue of SEED contains poems, by among others, H. D., Mary Butts, A. S. J. Tessimond, and stories by Sidney Hunt and Oswald Blakeston. It is called "the magazine of great distinction," but "a paper of growth" would be at least as true a description, since a note states that "though SEED'S contributors are among the world famous, the editors are especially anxious to find new talent," and it

may be said that SEED is a magazine fit for its contributors to read. The next issue, which will be out in April, with work by Bryher, Emily Holmes-Colman and Kay Boyle, can be obtained for two shillings from any bookseller by mentioning Joiner and Steele, 18, Took's Court, Chancery Lane, London; Zwemmer and Charles Lahr, of Red Lion Street, are special agents. It is edited by Herbert Jones and Oswald Blakeston, with special attention to typography, and published by E. Lahr, 68, Red Lion Street, W.C.1; but the editorial address is 9, Thornton Hill, London, S.W.19.

Le Cinema Contre Lui-meme. Ch. Dekeukeleire. (Ed. de la Nouvelle Equipe) 29, Rue Nestor de Tiere, Bruxelles.

The author resumes in this book several arguments from his *Réforme du Cinéma* which has already been reviewed in *Close Up*. He adds to them several *constatations* from facts that he has been able to observe.

To the number of factors concerning the purely commercial exploitation of the Belgian cinema, Ch. Dekeukeleire adds the immense publicity given to the star, a veritable organisation to glorify such or such an actor, and to impress them upon the attention of the public until at last it is persuaded that the slightest gesture of its idol is important. Most magazines give in and fill up their columns with photographs or correspondence of which the subject, colour of hair, beauty cream preferred, etc., reveals how efficacious is this system of publicity.

And to all reproaches the film *purveyors* answer, "but it is what the public demands." It would not be difficult to prove the contrary and the truth is probably that the public, contented or discontented, simply does not react with enough energy either way to give any indication of value.

When sound films began, big firms withdrew all their silent films from circulation. It is the customary procedure for any industrial firm anxious to float a new production, and the film, in this instance, was merely treated as a commercial article. We may add from our own experience, that this withdrawal of silent films had the character of an imperious *command* before which all renters who had remained faithful to silents were forced to purchase new projection equipment.

"To deceive the intellectuals and the recalcitrant in the audience, some independent directors are lured to the studios, where they are accorded a few liberties that hide an actual slavery," René Clair said recently. Eisenstein and Dreyer could not resign themselves to abdicate their power, and how we sympathise with them.

The avant garde cinema, so much on the decline last year, appears to be recovering and if well directed and well supported by lovers of film, it may save cinematography. But there must be a direct link between the people and the technicians, and not any longer just a vague collaboration, or

a narrow circle of initiates. For it is not a question of bringing exclusive ideas to the masses, but to dive instead into popular life, and to discover there sensitive and human motives.

Ch. Dekeukeleire, always the poet, ends by requiring that this "trust" in brains, this submission of machine and spirit to commercial ends be suppressed, and that the cinematographic industry be reorganised on a human basis.

Henri Poulaille, in *L'Age Ingrat du Cinema*, (Cahiers Bleux) insists upon the sociological value of cinematography and shows the disorder that has existed since the arrival of sound.

G. W. Pabst stated recently that it is impossible for him to make the films he wants, either in Germany or in France. A narrow nationalism, chauvinism, futility and restricted vision are ever obstacles in his path.

Ch. Dekeukeleire has reason therefore for his protests and we cannot do other than approve them. All the same it would seem impossible to lower any bridge between his ideals and the commercial and industrial reality. So long as capital is invested in the cinema in the same way as it is invested in the manufacture of tins of sardines, films *ought* to be exploited in a commercial way. The only possibility to establish a film art, is for those who love cinema and they are many, to found a collective and international organisation which would permit of rational activity. Let the cinema dividends go in what direction they will, provided that lovers of the screen may be able to satisfy their wishes. The full development of the film industry can be furthered only in constructing beside the big studios, well equipped workshops for the independent groups and for all those able to make truly good films.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

Jahrbuch für Photographie, Kinematographie und Reproduktionsverfahren für die Jahre, 1928-1929. Edited by Hofrat Dr. J. M. Eder, E. Kuchinka and C. Emmermann. XXXI. Band, I. Teil. [Wilh. Knapp, Halle (Saale), 1931.] Price: RM. 18.

This work is so well known that it need not be introduced to the experts of photography, cinematography and technics of reproduction. The yearbook could not be published during the years of the war and so a huge material was piled up to be sorted and worked up; the thirty-first volume, the first part of which has already been published reaches to the year 1929 and gives an account of anything new in this sphere. The yearbook suffered a great loss when E. Kuchinka, one of its editors, who had worked on the "Graphische Lehr-und Versuchsanstalt" in Vienna, died in 1930. But the reputation of C. Emmermann, his successor, guarantees the unchanged quality and thoroughness of that standard-work.

T. W.

Filmbücher für alle, edited by Kraszna-Krausz, 3, "Filmentwurf, Filmregie, Filmschnitt" von Alex Strasser Verlag: Wilh. Knapp, Halle (Saale). Price RM 5.30.

This book contains 160 pages, 117 illustrations, and is a manual of film direction for amateurs, containing—as the subtitle tells—laws and examples with regard to the planning, directing and cutting of films. As there are a lot of cheap cinema-cameras available nowadays, which are comparatively easy to handle, the number of amateurs of cinematography has largely increased; they have learned the technical details, but they usually lack experience as to the artistic aspect and for those who want to turn more than some odd scenes the present book will give useful instruction. It gives a survey on the different kinds of film (document, play-film, trick-film, etc.), suggestions for various plots, and describes the way from the idea and exposé of a film to a useful scenario. There are chapters on cutting and on subtitles. What is most admirable in the book is that—like the others of these series—it does not explain things merely theoretically, but illustrates them with many instructive examples.

T. W.

A VIENNESE FILM-BOOK.

Vienna and the film—that is a strange chapter in the history of cinema; a story of platonic love

There is, and always has been a film industry in Vienna, but it has never gained influence in the world. Viennese artists have become popular in other countries, have made careers in Berlin or Hollywood, but in the studios of their native city they are not to be found.

The landscape of Vienna, the Viennese humour, which is said to be one of the outstanding features of our national character — these always serve as "staffage" for Viennese films turned by foreign directors. Viennese music with its *Wiener lied* and Vienna waltz, assures estimable music. The studios of our city—their number is three or four—are rented by French or German companies, but for years not one really important film has been created to indicate clearly that Vienna was its birthplace, either in subject, *milieu* or conception. Nothing to show that it was in its own home in Vienna.

And what is characteristic in the films applies also to some extent to books written about them. The experts of other countries (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Hans Richter, Guido Bagier) write works of practical instruction, but works which contribute to film theory (Bela Balasz, Fülöp-Miller) come from Vienna.

Now a new book is lying before me; *The Film Age* (*Das Zeitalter des Films*) by Dr. Josef Gregor of the Vienna National Library, where he is director of the theatre section, annexed to which are the Archives of

Film Sciences (Archiv für Filmkunde), founded and directed by Dr. Gregor. They contain a great number of pictures and books pertaining to cinema, and represent an institution devoted to the theoretical side of film making.

The book profits by all the experience the author has gained in his dual capacity as head of the Archives and professor in the Max Reinhardt school, and, last but not least, as an attentive spectator in the cinema. It is a book on the spiritual foundations of the film, on its position in the culture of our time, written by a doctor of philosophy; not for the greater public, maybe, which wants to know how a film is made, and not for directors and dramatists of large film trusts, whose interest is in how to make better films (?)

This book contains observations only, but no practical hints, it reveals the historical development of the film as a cultural factor, and the psychological reasons for the effect produced in such a surprising degree on the civilizations of the twentieth century. The author is not a fanatic, not an artist wholeheartedly devoted to the film, but an impartial observer who sees both advantages and disadvantages, and who finally does not grant the film its right as an art!

More than two hundred illustrations help to explain Gregor's ideas; they certainly emphasise the scientific character of the work.

The first chapter deals with the history of the film, and links the connection of present-day culture with that of former times, showing—in too much detail sometimes—how the desire of men to capture eternal motion is as old as mankind itself. In our time this desire has reached a culminating point, and, rightly, Gregor calls our age a “visual age, an age always wanting the form even without the content,” and he confirms his statement by examples chosen from other spheres.

In the analysis of film dramaturgy, to which the third chapter is devoted, the question is excellently reduced to specific examples. Gregor here proves an attentive and cultivated spectator, capable of recognising deficiencies better than the film expert—to whom the pictorial effect and the effective progress of the action are apt to seem over important. And here also the old problem of differentiation between film and theatre, to which attention cannot be called too often, is explained.

“The film and contemporary art” constitutes the last but one chapter of the book, and here is treated the mutual influence of film, theatre and literature on one another. At the end the problem of the suggestive effect of the film is analysed from the point of view of psychology. The effect of music, to which rhythm is as necessary as it is to the film, is used for comparison. And especially where he examines rhythm and its effect on the spectator (and now also the listener) Gregor is able to clarify many things which have been sensed unconsciously only by those seeing the films. “Optic-acoustic effect” is his expression for it, and in his

opinion, it can sometimes be an evil effect, produced by machinery, whereas with other arts it comes from the depths of the soul. An old rebuke which takes little count of what is essential in the dynamics of film expression!

From this pessimistic prognosis, Gregor draws the conclusion that in the film the spiritual component is represented by amusement of the most primitive kind — the material, and far more influential component being profit. At the end of the book the wish is expressed that the film might become the passage of the spirit of art that is to come.

The Film Age is the bold and honest confession of a man who—always referring art to the decaying but still existing standards of culture—defends himself against the suggestive influence of the film. In spite of this, film lovers, who serve the cinema with their artistic strength, should read this book in which the art of the film is denied.

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